













VOL. 88

JANUARY 1983

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## JANUARY 1983

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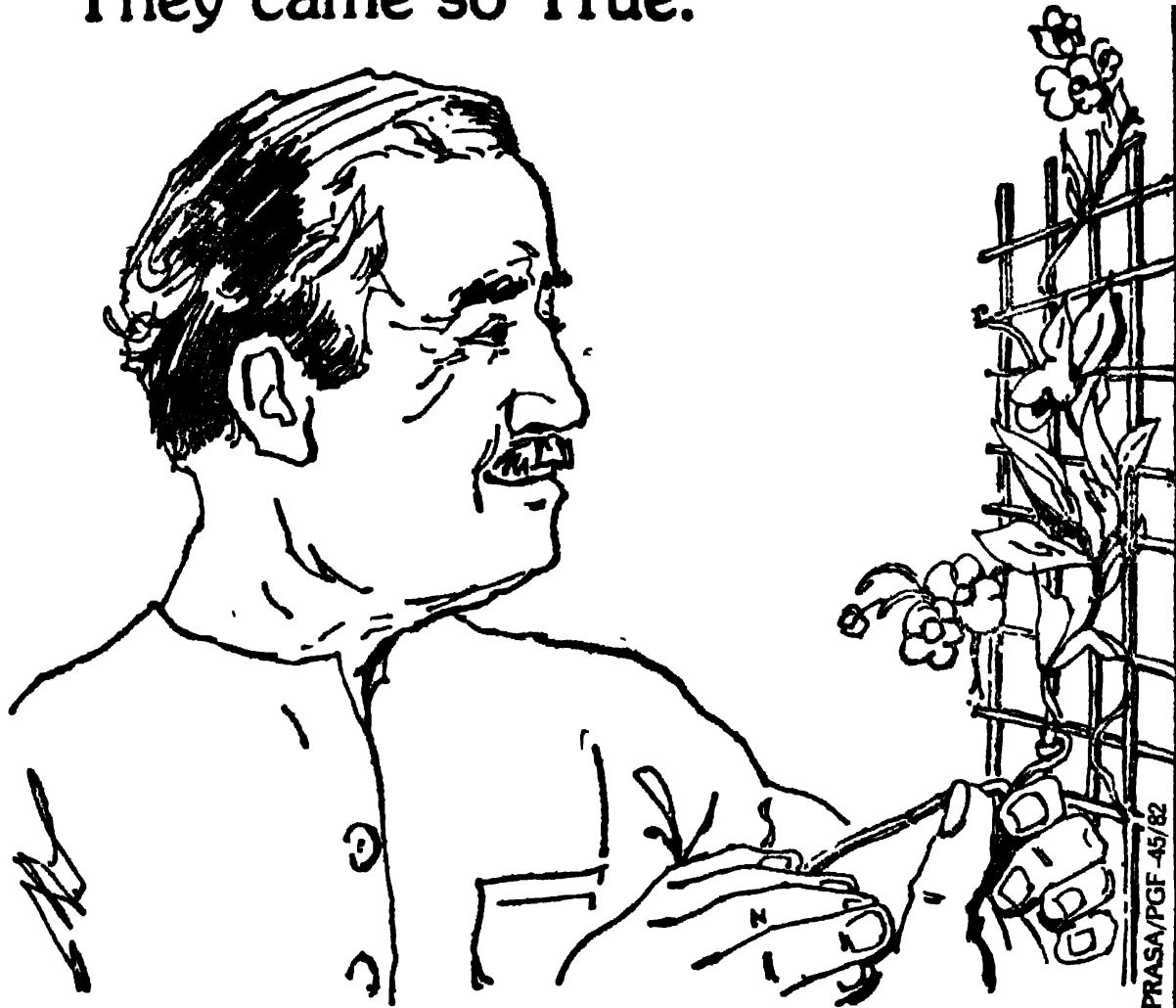
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# Prabuddha Bharata

VOL.

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No. 1

Arise ! Awake ! And stop not till the Goal is reached.

## INTEGRAL VISION OF VEDIC SEERS\*

*'Truth is one : sages call It by various names'*

पुरुष एवेदं सर्वं यद्भूत यच्च भव्यम् ।  
उतामृतत्वस्येशानो यदन्नेनातिरोहति ॥

Puruṣa is verily all this [visible world], all that was and all that will be.<sup>1</sup> He is also the Lord of immortality, for he transcends matter (*annam*).<sup>2</sup>

*Rg-Veda 10.90.2*

\* The *Puruṣa-sūkta* begun last month is continued here. According to Sāyana, Puruṣa here stands for Virāj, the Divine as the manifested physical universe of whom all bodies are parts. It is perhaps more correct to take Puruṣa as Hiraṇyagarbha, the Cosmic Self of whom all individual selves (Jivātman) are parts.

1. That is, the Supreme Spirit is the unchanging substratum of all that exists, existed and will exist. Since Sāyana takes Puruṣa to be Virāt, he interprets this line as: 'Just as during the present *kalpa* all beings are parts of the Virāt, so were they during the past *kalpas* and will be in the future *kalpas*.'

2. *Yad-annena-atirohati* literally means, 'since he rises beyond by food'. The word *anna* everywhere in the Upaniṣads means 'matter'. Here *annena* should be understood as the accusative *annam*. The meaning is that Puruṣa as Spirit transcends (atirohati) matter. This apparently simple clause has given rise to a dozen interpretations, including some meaningless ones by some Western scholars. Sāyana says that it means: 'The Virāt (in the beginning of *sr̥ṣṭi*) emerges from its causal state (in which it was during *pralaya*), and becomes the visible world so that living beings may obtain the fruits of their actions; but this manifestation is not his true nature'. Colbrook: 'He is that which grows by nourishment, and he is the distributor of immortality.' Muir: 'He is also the Lord of immortality, since by food he expands.' MacDonnel: 'He is the Lord of immortality which he grows beyond through food.' Griffith: 'The Lord of all immortality which waxes greater still by food.'

## TO OUR READERS

With this issue *Prabuddha Bharata* or *Awakened India* enters the eighty-eighth year of its publication. On this happy occasion we send our greetings and best wishes to our subscribers, readers, contributors, reviewers, publishers of books, friends and sympathizers, and thank them for their continued support. May the new year bring them peace, prosperity and spiritual fulfilment!

*Prabuddha Bharata* was first started in 1896 at Madras under the inspiration of Swami Vivekananda who was then preaching Vedanta in the West. After the untimely death of its gifted editor B. R. Rajam Iyer in May 1898, the journal was taken over by Swami Vivekananda in August and published from a rented house at Almora with Swami Swarupananda as its editor and Captain Sevier as its manager—both disciples of Swamiji. The very next

year *Prabuddha Bharata* found its permanent home when the Advaita Ashrama was founded on 19 March 1899 at Mayavati. The journal has ever since remained the official organ of the Ramakrishna Order and the chief courier of the Vedanta movement.

The main purpose of Swami Vivekananda in publishing this journal was to spread the message of Vedanta as a universal religion and a unified philosophy all over the world. Vedanta stands for Truth in all its living phases. In a poem contributed to the first issue of the revived journal Swamiji exhorted it to march on, awakening the masses, 'till Truth and Truth alone, in all its glory shines'.

This is the heritage that comes to you, our dear readers, through the columns of this journal. We hope you will make *Prabuddha Bharata* more widely known among your acquaintances.

## ABOUT THIS NUMBER

This month's EDITORIAL discusses the three types of space a knowledge of which is important in meditation.

In the first instalment of his article SWAMI VIVEKANANDA'S MESSAGE TO THE WEST, Robert P. Utter gives a memorable vignette of Swamiji and then, as an introduction to Swamiji's message, discusses the socio-cultural scene that prevailed in America at the time of Swamiji's visit to that country. The author is a retired teacher of English and philosophy at the City College of San Francisco.

Swami Mukhyananda, the author of the poem LAGHU-VIVEKANANDAM, is an Acharya at the Probationers' Training Centre, Belur Math.

Swami Muktinathananda of Belur Math presents a beautiful account of the inspiring life of SWAMI ATMANANDA, one of the foremost disciples of Swami Vivekananda.

VEDANTA IN GERMANY by Kurt Friedrichs, who has been actively associated with the Ramakrishna Movement in West Germany for over three decades, is a brief survey of Vedantic influences in Germany.

# SEEKING GOD THROUGH MEDITATION

(EDITORIAL)

## *Three kinds of space*

The supreme Self is to be sought, *anveṣṭavyam*, says the Upaniṣad.<sup>1</sup> 'Seek ye first the kingdom of God', says Christ.<sup>2</sup> The main purpose of monastic life is seeking God, *quaerere Deum*, says St. Benedict, the founder of monasticism in the West. The question naturally arises, where is God to be sought?

Everything exists somewhere in space. Where there is an object there must be space too. In school textbooks matter is defined as that which has mass and occupies space. The space that physical objects occupy is called *sthūlākāśa* or *bāhyākāśa*, the gross or external space. Along with time, space has become a concept of fundamental importance in modern physics. One of the great achievements of Einstein was to relate the laws governing the motion of matter and energy to the intrinsic properties of space-time. This shows that physical space is not mere vacuity but is something dynamic.<sup>3</sup> According to Vedānta space, known as *ākāśa*, is one of the five elements that constitute the whole universe. It is the first manifestation of the Supreme Self, it is the primordial element from which the other four elements evolve one after another.<sup>4</sup>

1. Cf. *Chāndogya-Upaniṣad* 8.7.1

2. Matthew 6:33.

3. Several theories have been propounded to account for the dynamic nature of physical space. The theory that space is filled with ether has been discarded after the Morley-Michelson experiment. The famous British physicist Paul Dirac has suggested that space is filled with electrons.

4. Cf. तस्माद् वा एतस्मादात्मन आकाशः संभूतः ।

आकाशाद् वायुः ... । *Taittirīya-Upaniṣad* 2.1.1.

This *ākāśa* is a subtle element. The gross *ākāśa* is actually a combination of all the five elements with the subtle *ākāśa* preponderating over the other four elements.

Thoughts are also objects and need space to exist. The space they occupy is the mind which is therefore called *cittākāśa* or *sūkṣmākāśa*, mental or subtle space. Ideas and images constantly arise in this space, remain there for a short time, and then disappear. Like the physical space the mental space too is not mere emptiness but is something dynamic.<sup>5</sup>

Subtler than this is pure consciousness which constitutes the *cidākāśa*, the space of consciousness. It is the infinite Reality which pervades and supports the other two *ākāśas*. About these three types of space Swami Vivekananda says :

Everything that we see or imagine or dream, we have to perceive in space. This is the ordinary space called *Mahākāśa* or elemental space. When a Yogi reads the thoughts of other men or perceives supersensuous objects, he sees them in another sort of space called *Chittākāśa*, the mental space. When perception has become objectless, and the soul shines in its own nature, it is called *Chidākāśa* or knowledge space.<sup>6</sup>

A spiritual aspirant must have a clear understanding of these three kinds of space. The knowledge of the gross or external space enables him to see the actions of men and women, the whole drama of life, in a cosmic perspective. In the astronomical vastness of the universe how insignificant human achievements and follies appear!

5. According to another view (supported by *Bṛhadāraṇyaka-Upaniṣad* 3.8.4) the subtle space is pervaded and supported by a causal space (*kāraṇākāśa* or *mahākāraṇa*) which is identified with *Maya* or cosmic ignorance. From this standpoint, *Ātman* or *Brahman* as pure consciousness (*cit*) is beyond all notions of space. This view is known as *vyomāñita-vāda*.

6. 'Rāja Yoga', ch. 4, in *The Complete Works of Swami Vivekananda* (Calcutta: Advaita Ashrama, 1977) vol. 1, p. 162.



Knowledge of the mental space is necessary to understand the way thoughts influence us.

### *Sūkṣmākāśa*

What we call mind is only a part of the vast cosmic mind known as Mahat. The space of the individual mind is called *cittākāśa* and that of the universal mind is called *mahadākāśa*. They are in dynamic contact with each other, and together constitute the subtle space, *sūkṣmākāśa*. All the great ideas—the laws of science, the concepts of philosophy, the principles of morality and the archetypes of religion—as well as the evil and destructive ideas (personified as the Devil in Semitic religions) exist in the Mahat. They enter our minds and influence us when we open the *cittākāśa* to them which we constantly do. Says Swami Vivekananda :

It is quite possible therefore that this atmosphere of ours is full of such thought pulsations, both good and evil. Every thought projected from every brain goes on pulsating, as it were, until it meets a fit object that will receive it. Any mind which is open to receive some of these impulses will take them immediately. So when a man is doing evil actions he has brought his mind to a certain state of tension and all the waves which correspond to that state of tension, and which may be said to be already in the atmosphere, will struggle to enter into his mind. That is why an evil doer generally goes on doing more and more evil. Such also will be the case with the doer of good ; he will open himself to all the good waves that are in the atmosphere and his good actions will also become intensified.<sup>7</sup>

How does the *cittākāśa* open to the Mahat? Two factors are involved in this process. One is the action of *samskāras* the residues of past experiences. A *samskāra* is not just an 'impression' ; it is rather a small whirlpool or 'field' in Prāṇa and acts as a

magnetic field does. Thoughts are nothing but vibrations of Prāṇa. Just as countless radio waves are moving around us, so Prāṇa waves from all directions are constantly striking us. When a particular *samskāra* rises in the mind (we then call it a 'desire') it disturbs the Prāṇa in the *cittākāśa* and the whole mind starts vibrating in a certain frequency. Then the mind becomes receptive to any external Prāṇa wave (thought) that corresponds to this internal frequency. This phenomenon is quite similar to what physicists call resonance.<sup>7</sup>

The second process is the activity of the *cakras*, the centres of consciousness connected with the three Prāṇa-channels *idā*, *pingalā* and *suṣumnā*. Each *cakra* is the point at which a certain level of the individual mind and the corresponding level of the cosmic mind (Mahat) meet. Each *cakra* acts as a valve regulating the exchange of material between these two minds. The first three lower centres—*mūlādhāra*, *svādhiṣṭhāna* and *maṇipūra*—control the vital functions of the body and the lower mind. As a radio set can be tuned to any broadcasting station by operating a knob (connected to the thermionic valves inside), so the lower *cakras* can be operated to receive good or bad thought waves. As a matter of fact, this is what everyone is constantly doing. Since both the action of the *samskāras* and the action of the *cakras* go on in the unconscious, most people are seldom aware of all these processes. It is good to remember that behind every good or bad thought there is a mental mechanism operated by us. Good and bad thoughts disturb us only because we allow it consciously or unconsciously.

We are not only receiving Prāṇa waves from outside but are also constantly generating our own thought waves and broadcasting them into the Mahat or cosmic mind. It is not possible to meditate unless these two processes are stopped. The influx of

7. 'Karma Yoga', ch. 6, in *The Complete Works*, vol. 1, p. 82.

external thought currents must be checked first, and then the rise of *samskāras* must be prevented. An advanced yogi can perceive an incoming thought wave and reject it. He can close the lower *cakras* and make his mind as still as a block of solid glass, or he can withdraw his Self completely from all contact with the world. Then his mind ceases to receive or emit thought waves. There is an interesting Zen story which illustrates this capacity.

Hui Chung, who was Zen Master to the emperor Su Tsung of the Tang dynasty, was highly respected by the emperor, as well as by all the Zen Buddhists of China. One day a famous Indian monk named 'Great Ear Tripitaka' arrived at the capital. This monk was said to be able to read other people's minds without the slightest difficulty or hesitation. Word of his accomplishment having reached the emperor, the Indian monk was summoned to the royal palace to demonstrate his powers before the Zen master. The following dialogue took place.

Hui Chung: 'Tell me where does my mind go now?'  
Tripitaka: 'Your reverence is the Zen master of a nation; how can you go to West Ssu Chuan to watch the boat races?'

Hui Chung: 'Tell me, where does my mind go now?'

Tripitaka: 'Your reverence is the Zen master of a nation; how can you go to the bridge of Tien Ching to watch the monkeys at play?'  
After a moment's silence Hui Chung asked him, 'Now, where does my mind go?' This time Tripitaka concentrated with intense effort for a long time, but could not detect any thought of the Zen master. Whereupon Hui Chung retorted, 'You ghost of a wild fox! Where is your telepathic power now?'<sup>8</sup>

What the Zen master did was to close the doors of his *cittākāśa* and make it *vṛtti-śūnya*, devoid of thought waves. During the early stages of spiritual life it is not possible to shut out all thoughts and attain stillness of mind. During this period what

the aspirant has to do is to learn to open himself more and more to spiritual thought currents. There are three disciplines which are of great help in this task. One is the company of holy men. Spiritual vibrations emanating from holy men purify and elevate our minds without any effort on our part.

The second discipline is Karma Yoga. Bad *samskāras* are to be controlled by good *samskāras*, and good *samskāras* can be produced only through good Karma. However, Karma Yoga is much more than mere doing good work. Hindu scriptures describe Karma Yoga as having four limbs: sacrifice or worship (*yajña*), charity (*dāna*), austerity (*tapas*) and the study of scriptures (*vedānūvacana* or *svādhyāya*).<sup>9</sup> Sacrifice or worship is the surrender of *kartā*, *karma* and *karma-phala* (the ego, the work and the fruit of work) to the Cosmic Person known as Virāt; it gives a Godward turn to one's whole life. The root cause of all evil is attachment which means the enslavement of the will to sense objects; charity loosens the will. The purpose of austerity is to reduce the power of the lower instincts. The three main forms of austerity are: control of sex, control of food and control of speech; through these the three lower *cakras*—*mūlādhāra*, *svādhiṣṭhāna* and *maṇipūra* respectively—get controlled. Lastly, the study of scriptures removes ignorance from the mind and implants higher ideas in it. Thus Karma Yoga helps to control the mind in three ways: (1) it produces good *samskāras* which check the rise of bad *samskāras*; (2) it detaches the will and directs it Godward; (3) it controls the action of the lower centres.

<sup>9</sup>. Cf तमेतं वेदानुवचनेन ब्राह्मणा विविदिषन्ति यज्ञेन दानेन तपसाऽनाशकेन ।

*Bṛhadāraṇyaka-Upaniṣad* 4.4.22.

तपस्-स्वाध्याय-ईश्वरप्रणिधानानि क्रियायोगः ।

*Patañjali, Yoga-Sūtra* 2.1,

<sup>8</sup>. Chang Chen-Chi *The Practice of Zen* (London: Rider and Co., 1960) pp. 41-42.

The third discipline is prayer. Prayer helps the aspirant in three ways. In the first place, by making him depend on God alone, prayer turns his mind away from external influences. We open ourselves to the evil influences of our environment only when we depend upon persons and things for our support. Secondly, prayer activates the heart-centre known as *anāhata cakra* which automatically de-activates the lower centres. Thirdly, prayer opens the mind not only to divine grace but also to the spiritual thought currents of saints. Illumined souls of the past and the present are continually sending forth their good wishes and blessings in the form of prayers directed towards the Divine. God acts as a great reflector reflecting these holy thoughts into the hearts of all those who pray to Him. Every deity and Avatara acts as a lens for focusing these spiritual thought waves. When you pray to Kṛṣṇa or Christ or Buddha, your mind becomes consonant with the minds of all those saints and devotees who worship Kṛṣṇa or Christ or Buddha, and receives their thoughts. Their pure thoughts purify your mind and strengthen your spiritual aspiration.

As prayer deepens, it transforms itself into meditation when all the doors of the mind get closed except the door to the heart through which a single stream of thought flows in silence like a beam of light.

### *Cidākāśa*

We have seen that both the gross external space and the subtle mental space are material (*bhautika*), being made up of the elemental *ākāśa*. Transcending these two types of space, but supporting and pervading them, is the pure consciousness of the ultimate Reality known as *cidākāśa*.

Just as the mental space has two dimensions, the individual and the cosmic, so also the *cidākāśa* has two dimensions, the individual and the infinite. The individual

*cidākāśa* is called *daharākāśa* in the Upaniṣads. It is consciousness limited by the *buddhi*, the faculty of intelligence and intuition in man. It is identified with the cavity (*daharah*) of the heart, not the physical heart but the spiritual heart. It is in this space that the Jīvātman or individual Self dwells. In fact, *daharākāśa* itself is the individual Self.

The infinite dimension of *cidākāśa* is known in the Upaniṣads as *parama-vyoman*;<sup>10</sup> we may call it *paramākāśa* the Supreme Space. It is not a mere extension of the heart-space, for it permeates and supports the heart-space as the *antaryāmin* or Inner Controller. It is the consciousness of Hiranyagarbha, the Cosmic Soul. It is where the Yogi seeks to unite the individual spirit with the Supreme Spirit. It is where the Jñāni tries to merge his individuality. It corresponds to the *dharma-kāya* (transcendental body of Buddha) of the Mahāyāna devotional schools and the *śūnya* of Mādhyamika Buddhism. It is in this supreme *cidākāśa* that the Bhakta seeks the beloved of his heart, the Lord. It is out of this infinite consciousness that the great Gods and Avatars emerge; only the highest type of devotee in his most advanced stage of experience realizes this truth. The Upaniṣad says: 'Verily, what is called *ākāśa* is the revealer of Name and Form; that within which they are, is Brahman; that is immortal, that is Atman.'<sup>11</sup> A well-known devotional hymn of the Pāñcarātra Saṁhita says: 'Thou hast no colour, no form, no weapons, no particular abode. Yet Thou revealest Thyself unto Thy devotees

40. यो वेद निहितं गुहायां परमे व्योमन् ।

*Taittirīya-Upaniṣad* 2.1.1.

41. आकाशो वै नाम नामरूपयोर्निर्बहिता ते  
यदन्तरा तद् ब्रह्म तदमृतं स आत्मा ।

*Chāndogya-Upaniṣad* 8.14.1.

in a personal form.<sup>12</sup> Sri Ramakrishna explains this profound truth of mystical experience in a simple way :

Think of Brahman, Existence—Knowledge—Bliss Absolute as a shoreless ocean. Through the cooling influence, as it were, of the Bhakta's love, the water has frozen at places into blocks of ice. In other words, God now and then assumes various forms for His lovers and reveals Himself to them as a Person. But with the rising of the Sun of knowledge, the blocks of ice melt. Then one doesn't feel anymore that God is a Person, nor does one see God's forms.<sup>13</sup>

Since the *paramākāśa* is self-luminous (for it is nothing but pure consciousness which is self-luminous) it is also called the Supreme Light, *param-jyoti*.<sup>14</sup>

The relation between the individual (*dahara*) and cosmic (*parama*) aspects of *cidākāśa* becomes important in the advanced stages of meditation. The fact that Bādarāyaṇa in his *Brahma-Sūtra* has devoted eight aphorisms to this topic shows how important it is.<sup>15</sup> In the Upanisads it forms a separate path of meditation under the name *dahara-vidyā*. Most meditations practised in modern times are based on this ancient technique. We shall discuss it later on.

### *Doors of perception and power*

We have seen that there are three kinds of space. Before proceeding further it is necessary to digress a little in order to discuss the properties of these spaces through which the soul has to pass. Each space is connected to the next one through certain

'door'. The five sense organs—eyes, ears, nose, tongue and skin—are the doors which connect the external gross space (*sthūlākāśa*) with the inner subtle space (*sūkṣmākāśa*); through them we communicate with the external world. The inner space is divided into that of the individual mind (*cittākāśa*) and that of the cosmic mind (*muhadākāśa*); the three lower *cakras* are the doors which inter-connect these two compartments; through them our thoughts stream out to other people and their thoughts enter our minds. This mental space is connected to the third type of space called *cidākāśa* through the *buddhi* or spiritual heart which corresponds to the *anāhata cakra* of the Tantras. The *cidākāśa* itself is divided into two: the space in the heart known as *daharākāśa*, and the infinite realm of divine consciousness known as *paramavyoman*. The spiritual heart acts as a chamber with two doors: one door connecting the mental space with the space in the heart, and the other door opening the heart into the realm of infinite consciousness.

Two points are to be noted in this context. One is that each 'door' represents a certain threshold or transitional point where man's consciousness undergoes a sudden change. Each door leads to a new world of experience. Secondly, there are two types of doors: *ūrdhva-mukha*, that which opens vertically; and *pārśva-mukha*, that which opens sideways. The former type leads to higher and higher experiences, while the latter leads to varieties of experience in each plane.

Each *ākāśa* is a plane of consciousness which holds in its vastness a limitless store of experiences. Look at the outer physical space. From the atoms and grains of sand to the stars and galaxies, how many objects it contains, everything governed by the great laws of nature which are indeed the properties of the physical space. Humanity has not been able to exhaust the experiences of the physical world nor will ever be.

12. न ते रूपं न चाकारो नायुधानि न चास्पदम् ।

तथाऽपि पुरुषाकारो भक्तानां त्वं प्रकाशसे ॥

*Jitem-te Stotra* 1.5.

13. *The Gospel of Sri Ramakrishna* (Madras: Ramakrishna Math, 1974) p. 78.

14. Cf. *Chāndogya-Upaniṣad* 8.3.4 and 8.12.3.

15. Cf. *Brahma-Sūtra* 1.3.14-21.

When we come to the mental space we meet with a similar phenomenon—a limitless number of ideas, images, symbols and experiences constantly bombarding our minds. Most people know nothing beyond these. But the mental space is the realm of Prāṇa, and by controlling Prāṇa it is possible to open oneself to the subtler regions of the cosmic mind and acquire different kinds of psychic powers. The ancient yogic term for these subtle planes is *madhumati* or *madhu-bhūmi*, 'the plane of honey'. The psychic powers that come from this region are called *madhu-pratīka*, 'honeyed images'. According to Patañjali these powers are of two types. One group consists of the eight supernatural powers and physical strength obtained through the practice of concentration on the five elements.<sup>16</sup> The other group consists of three psychic powers acquired through concentration on the five sense-organs.<sup>17</sup>

When a yogi transcends the ordinary mind and reaches the plane of *cidākāśa* certain higher spiritual powers (like omniscience) come to him unsought, in accordance with the laws of the spiritual world. The ancient technical term for these spiritual powers is *viśoka* or 'sorrowless'.<sup>18</sup> Unlike the psychic powers called *madhupratīkas*, these higher spiritual powers (*viśoka*) are not meant for enjoyment and cannot be misused. Only a few very advanced saints and yogis ever

attain them, and they use these powers with great caution and only for the spiritual progress of others. They are the great awakeners of mankind.

A person who has acquired the capacity to transcend even these spiritual powers reaches the highest state of perfection known in Vedānta as *jīvanmukti*, and in ancient Yoga as *param-prasamkhyāna*. In Mahāyāna Buddhist scriptures this state is called *dharma-megha* or 'cloud of virtue' which is the last and highest of the ten stages on the way to Buddhahood.<sup>19</sup> It is only when a person attains this tenth stage that he will become a *Bodhisattva*. At this stage he has two options before him : either to give up his body and attain final liberation (*kaivalya* or *pari-nirvāṇa*), or to return to the world in order to help others to find spiritual enlightenment. All the great religious teachers of mankind chose the latter alternative. Sri Ramakrishna has spoken of them as *īśvarakotis*.

In his commentary on Patañjali's Yoga Aphorisms, Vyāsa divides spiritual aspirants into four categories depending on the planes of experience they have attained. 1. *Prathamā-kalpika* : includes those who are struggling in meditation. 2. *Madhu-bhūmiku* : includes those who have got some awakening and are passing through the plane of psychic powers (known as *madhu-pratīka*). 3. *Prajñā-jyotis* : includes those illumined souls who are advancing in the *cidākāśa* and find higher spiritual powers (called *viśoka*) coming to them. 4. *Ati-krānta bhāvanīya* : includes the few fully illumined Jīvanmuktas, who are freed from all bonds, who have risen above even the desire to use spiritual powers, and are waiting for the final dissolution of the body and the mind.<sup>20</sup>

16. These eight supernatural powers (*aṣṭa-aiśvarya*) are: *aṇīmā* (capacity to become very small in size) *laghimā* (to become very light) *mahimā* (to assume an immense size) *prāpti* (the power which brings all objects within his reach) *prākāmya* (unobstructed willpower) *vasītvam* (to bring people and things under one's control) *īśītvam* (lordship) *vaśīkāma-avasāyītvam* (materialization of one's wishes). Cf. Patañjali, *Yoga-Sūtra* 3. 45.

17. These three powers are: *manojavitvam* (to travel faster than thought) *vikaraṇa-bhāva* (telepathy and clairvoyance) and *pradhāna-jaya* (control over Nature). Cf. *Yoga-Sūtra* 3.48 and Vyāsa's commentary on it.

18. Cf. Vyāsa's commentary on *Yoga-Sūtra* 3.49.

19. *Yoga-Sūtra* 4.28. Also see Vyāsa's commentary on *Yoga-Sūtra* 1.2. Evidently, Patañjali has borrowed the term 'Dharma-megha' from Buddhist sources.

20. Vyāsa's commentary on *Yoga-Sūtra* 3.51.

The purpose of the above digression is to make our discussion comprehensive enough to include the full range of man's mental powers and possibilities. Seeking God, however, is a straight path. Any deviation from this path in the form of seeking psychic powers, etc. is a waste of time and energy and an obstacle to the attainment of the highest goal of life, as Patañjali himself has clearly pointed out.<sup>21</sup> Now to return to our main topic, meditation is not doing something extraordinary. It is only an attempt to extend the natural states of awareness to the highest dimension and realize one's real divine identity.

#### *The three ākāśas and three avasthās*

From the Advaitic standpoint nothing exists except Brahman, and so *cidākāśa* is the only real space, the other two spaces being unreal. In the *Chāndogya-Upaniṣad* the three types of space are described as follows: 'That space which is outside the body is indeed Brahman. The same space is indeed the space inside the body. The same space is the space of the heart. This Brahman is all-filling and unchanging.'<sup>22</sup>

Commenting on the above passage, Śaṅkarācārya points out that the three types of space correspond to the three *avasthās* or states through which the daily life of a man passes. In the *jāgrat* or waking state he remains mostly in the external, gross space. In the *svapna* or dream state his 'I' moves in the mental, subtle space. In the *suṣupti* or deep-sleep state his I-consciousness is withdrawn into the *daharākāśa* in the heart. But, owing to the covering of ignorance, it does not come into touch with

the *parama-vyoman*, the infinite dimension of *cidākāśa*. That is why nobody gets up from sleep with the feeling that he is the Infinite.

In meditation we move from one space to another consciously. When we sit for meditation, our first struggle is to detach the *cittākāśa* from the external space. We need an inner space to install our Chosen Deity or some other object of meditation, but the distractions of the outside world constantly intrude into it so much so that we are unable to find any space inside at all. But through long practice as we succeed in eliminating the distractions, we will gain a clear understanding of the mental space, and then we will be able to maintain a steady stream of a single thought consciously. Whereas in the dream state thoughts occur at random without voluntary control, in meditation the whole thought production is under the control of the will which chooses and maintains only a single thought current called *dhyāna-pratyaya*. This marks the second stage in meditation.

In the next stage the I-consciousness moves into the *daharākāśa* in the heart, and there shines in its own intrinsic effulgence as the Jīvātman. During deep sleep the soul being enveloped in ignorance does not gain this knowledge. Moreover, in deep sleep there is no further progress and the soul returns to the dream and waking states. But in the third stage of meditation the soul becomes aware of a vaster state of existence and of its real nature as a part of the Paramātman, the Supreme Self that fills all space with His luminous presence. The struggle of the Jīvātman to transcend its limitations and attain union with the Paramātman marks the fourth stage of meditation.

Thus meditation takes us through different types of space—from the gross to the subtle and from the subtle to the transcendental. And as we move from one space to another, our consciousness undergoes transformation. Each type of space stands for a

२१. ते समाधायुपसर्गा व्युत्थाने सिद्धयः ।

*Yoga-Sūtra* 3.37.

२२. यद् तद् ब्रह्मेतीदं वाक् तद्योस्य बहिर्घा पुरुषादाकाशो ... पूर्णमप्रवर्ति ... ।

*Chāndogya-Upaniṣad* 3.12.7-9.

particular level of consciousness, and each 'door' marks the threshold at which the self or I-consciousness assumes a higher dimension. Seeking God through meditation is not like seeking somebody in the outside

world. It is continual process of transformation of the self, beginning with the ego and ending in the Supreme Self.

(To be concluded)

## SWAMI VIVEKANANDA'S MESSAGE TO THE WEST

ROBERT P. UTTER

In the *Bhagavad-Gītā* Kṛṣṇa says, 'Whenever virtue declines and evil increases, I incarnate Myself to rescue the holy, to destroy evil and to establish righteousness.'<sup>1</sup> History shows that from time to time world teachers have arisen who have done just this. Swami Vivekananda was such a world teacher. He travelled all over the world and taught in both the East and the West. He always taught what was needed by the country and culture he was in. His teachings in the West were formulated to meet the special needs of the West, just as his teachings in the East were formulated for the East.

He admired the West for its energy, its enterprise, its enthusiasm, its accomplishments in practical affairs. But he was not deceived by the fact that the accomplishments of the modern West were mostly in the realm of wealth and physical comforts. He saw that beneath its mask of easy optimism the West had desperate need of something more than material prosperity and efficiency. He knew that this need was neither physical nor intellectual, but spiritual.

He admired and loved the Orient also, especially India, for it was the land of his birth and he was always a great patriot but was based on spiritual perception. He loved the Orient for its age-old tradition of renunciation and its whole-souled pursuit

of spiritual realization. He knew of its vast accomplishments in that area, of its long line of ṛsis from time immemorial down to the present who have immersed themselves in the Infinite and turned their backs on the finite. But he saw that this too needed correction, for to turn one's back on the finite completely is to forget the vow of the world teachers, the Buddhas and Bodhisattvas, the Rāmas and the Kṛṣṇas, and the Śaṅkarācāryas and the Caitanyas, and all the sung and unsung sages who have vowed to help all beings attain enlightenment. He knew that India needed some of the practicality of the West, and that the West needed the spirituality of the East.

As a world teacher of both East and West Swami Vivekananda knew that meditation and realization must be put to practical use for the relief of the sufferings of the world, and that Buddha's basic pronouncement that all relative experience is suffering would be of no avail without the opening of the gates to liberation or nirvana for as many illusion-bound souls as possible. He knew that Buddha's last temptation under the Bo tree had been to refrain from teaching anyone what he had realized, for the Swami himself had felt the pull of that very same temptation. He had asked his Master, Ramakrishna, to grant him the boon of staying in samadhi for many days at a time. Ramakrishna knew that this desire, worthy as it might be in itself, was not the destiny

1. *Bhagavad-Gītā*, 4.7-8.

of the world teacher Swami Vivekananda was to become, and that this desire must be given an even higher direction and turned into the desire to help mankind achieve illumination. When the future Swami Vivekananda finally achieved *nirvikalpa samādhi*, Sri Ramakrishna said, 'Now you know all. But this knowledge will be locked in a chest, and I will have the key. Not till you have done my work will you have it again.'<sup>2</sup> All of Swami Vivekananda's life and teachings must be studied in this light: he was doing his Master's work. Jesus said, 'I am about my Father's business.'<sup>3</sup> Swami Vivekananda once said he felt as though divine hands were holding his and guiding him in everything he did,<sup>4</sup> and when he was at a loss to find new material to lecture on while in the United States, he often would hear the voice of Sri Ramakrishna telling him at great length what to say.<sup>5</sup> This means that Swami Vivekananda was a world teacher who was rooted in another world teacher, Sri Ramakrishna, and that he cannot be understood apart from his Master. It also means that his world-wide work was never merely abstract and theoretical, but was always the intensely practical job of bringing God to man and awakening man to God.

We can see, then, that Swamiji's teachings cannot be studied casually, as isolated lectures, as mere speculative theory, or as something occurring in a vacuum but rather must be understood and related to his whole teachings and to the teachings of Sri Ramakrishna, as part of the world-teachings of the triple world-teacher incarnation we can only call the Ramakrishna-Holy Mother-Vivekananda constellation phenomenon, a phenomenon of incarnated divinity unique

so far as we know in the whole history of mankind. Nothing that Swamiji said is a casual remark; everything has the deepest significance, for it is God's voice speaking to our age.

What, then, does he say to us in the West that we urgently need to know, and to act upon and to take to heart so completely that we change the fabric of our lives by ingesting it into our deepest being?

Before we can appreciate the significance of his message we must consider what kind of a man he was, and what the needs of the West were and still are, for the quality of his being was as much a part of his message as the content, and the needs of his hearers were equally much a part of his message, so that in his case the man, the needs of the hearers, and the message were one.

### *The man*

To try to describe Swamiji is impossible, for unlike ordinary man he was not a single kind of man but was the totality of mankind in one, the potential of mankind realized in human flesh. Ordinary men realize in their lives only a few qualities of the universal man, but Swamiji realized all possible qualities to the maximum degree. Ordinary men with their single-track minds can be compared to flashlights, or, at most, searchlights, that send out a single beam in one direction. But Swamiji was like the sun shining in all directions at once. To our single-track minds he may appear contradictory, but in him these contradictions are only seeming contradictions, complementary qualities and meanings, not outright logical contradictions. Thus he lived and taught not one path or yoga exclusively, not even one path predominately, but all paths in one. He did not slight one path for another; he was not lacking in reason, nor in emotion, nor in action, nor in meditation, but he taught to both East

2. *The Life of Swami Vivekananda* (Calcutta: Advaita Ashrama, 1960) p. 145.

3. Luke, 2:49.

4. *The Life of Swami Vivekananda* p. 595.

5. *ibid*, p. 332.



and West the equal practice of all four paths as far as such practice is possible for each individual, and in him this practice became the absolute fusion of the four paths into one. Reason without love is dry; reason without action is impractical; reason without meditation is ineffectual. And so one could go through each path, showing how each lacks something essential if the others are missing. Thus like a four-faced divinity he looked in all directions at once and was a whole man and taught others to be whole.

There was indeed an air of divinity about him. Everyone who saw him felt it. No one near him could avoid feeling the force of his divine power almost like a shock-wave. Yet through all this extraordinary nimbus of vibrant power that seemed to envelop him in a cloud of fire, there hovered an infinite gentleness too, like the sleeping sea, like the sunlight, like moonlight on snowy peaks. He was a poised thunderbolt forever humming an immortal song like a murmuring stream. He radiated this singing power as the sun shines. It made his abstract, intellectual teachings visible, almost palpable. When he spoke of the soul and of God, the superconscious experience behind these words could be felt by everyone, and everyone's mind became permanently expanded and changed. Only a divine incarnation could do this as completely as he did.

He was a divine incarnation, as were Sri Ramakrishna and Holy Mother, but he was a divine incarnation in his own right, not just moon shining by a borrowed light. Every day and every moment he proved this to his companions, his friends, his hearers, and his disciples. One example will suffice to illustrate his divine powers which he used only for the good of mankind.

One day in Chicago in March of 1894 the French opera singer Emma Calve went to see Swami Vivekananda. It was an extraordinary meeting in every way. She was in a state of extreme desperation over several

personal tragedies, the most recent being the sudden and untimely accidental death of her daughter by fire. A friend suggested she see Swami Vivekananda, for his fame as a healer of souls had spread, but all that Calve wanted to do was to commit suicide. Several times she tried to drown herself in the lake, but some unseen power seemed to turn her steps toward the house where Swamiji was staying. Each time, however, she went away without ringing the bell. Finally one time she did ring, and in terrible agitation entered the room where Swamiji was sitting at his desk. Without raising his eyes he said, 'Come in, my child. Don't be afraid. What a troubled atmosphere you have about you. Be calm. It is essential.' He told her things about herself which only she knew, although, as she says, he didn't even know her name. When she expressed amazement at this, he only smiled as though she were a child asking a foolish question. Jesus did the same thing with the Samaritan woman at the well. Swamiji's advice to Calve was to be cheerful, not to brood on sorrow, to build up her health, and to transmute her emotions into 'some form of eternal expression'. Jesus told the Samaritan woman at the well that whoever drank of the water he gave would never thirst again. We do not know if the Samaritan woman was permanently changed by her meeting with Jesus, though we naturally surmise that she was. But we know from Calve's own account that she was changed, and that she was changed immediately and permanently, for she left him cheered, and she soon became peaceful, vivacious, and happy.<sup>6</sup> Note that Swamiji did not find fault with her, or call her a sinner, or tell her to give up her operatic career. Instead, he told her to

6. Marie Louise Burke, *Swami Vivekananda in America: New Discoveries* (Calcutta: Advaita Ashrama, 1966) pp. 120-2; and *The Life of Swami Vivekananda*, pp. 350-1.

spiritualize her art, and, besides seeing deeply into her life and character by super-normal means, he managed to staunch the bleeding wound of her grief and suffering and to lift her mind upward into joyfulness, not by words of consolation or by abstract philosophy, but simply by the power of his overwhelming spirituality. He put out the raging storm of her grief as water puts out fire. He did not lecture; he gave.

Swamiji gave the vision of God to all who could take it, as much as the small vessels of finite minds could hold. He poured out God in abundance, as a person pours out tea from a pot into cups. Swamiji poured God all over the world on everyone's head. Words were the smallest part of his message.

### *The needs of the West*

But there was a message in words for the West as well as a superverb one. It was a message hand-crafted to meet the special needs of the West. It can be better understood 'when we understand those special needs in the light of the time, the end of the 19th century.

To begin with, the West was ignorant of the vast spiritual and cultural history and heritage of India. The West regarded all Orientals as so-called 'heathens' who worshipped 'idols', and who followed either a godless religion or one with many gods, both of which were high crimes to Westerners, who did not realize that many in the West were godless, and many were polytheists without knowing it. For polytheism takes many forms other than the worship of images in temples; the more common form is that of according the status of reality to the apparent world of multiple sense objects. According to that definition Western man is just as polytheistic as anyone else. The West, however, did not realize that human beings are essentially the same the world

over, for they knew practically nothing about Oriental culture. Among the majority of Westerners at that time there seemed to be very little interest in any Oriental culture beyond the fad of collecting Oriental rugs, dishes, furniture, and art.

But there were, of course, some beginnings of knowledge seeping in among a few scholars. Translations of Chinese and Indian literature were beginning to trickle in slowly, in small quantities. Max Mueller and Paul Deussen were German Indologists who made translations and wrote erudite studies of the Upanishads and the Gita. Edwin Arnold also was a Sanskrit scholar who wrote the life of Buddha in English poetry and made a poetic translation of the Gita. Emerson, Thoreau, and Whitman knew the Gita and other works of Hindu religion and some Chinese philosophy as translated into English or other Western languages. All these men were introducing Hinduism to the West, but without a living guru to teach it, the ideas remained ideas only. None of these men brought the problem out in the open or seemed even vaguely aware of it. For centuries the West had taken the word 'mystic' literally and had hidden their mystics away out of sight. The West had forgotten what mystics the world over always taught, that God is to be seen, tasted, eaten, and enjoyed, not just talked about abstractly. So even these six men, sincere as they were, remained essentially sleepers unaware of the need to awaken or of the means of awakening. Only Thoreau stirred uneasily in his sleep. Whitman and Emerson were too optimistic to feel the uneasiness of the problem. Thoreau went to Walden Pond to try to live an ascetic, withdrawn and spiritual life. How well he succeeded may be judged from his book *Walden*. He wrote with great insight as well as poetry about his experiences, outward experiences, that is, only vaguely hinting about possible inward ones. Yet

one feels that he yearned for something he could not quite find. He recognized Chinese and Hindu religion as revealing unsurpassed heights of sublime wisdom, but his longing was undirected, and it remained largely unaware and subliminal. The peace of spirit which he longed for he could not find, not even at Walden Pond. Thoreau longed for more than he knew; what he really longed for, knowingly or unknowingly, was a guru to make the word of God flesh, to bring the living fire from heaven to mankind, to teach him and the world to find true peace. The whole Western world was deep-sunk in its dogmatic slumbers, and it needed a dynamic and heroic prince to awaken it and rescue it from its prison of isolationism. Swami Vivekananda was that prince, and he was sorely needed. But he was not yet born in the flesh at the time Thoreau lived at Walden Pond.

There was, of course, more to it than this. The history of Western ideas shows that mysticism always took a back seat to empiricism and rationalism in the West. This is not to say that mysticism was not always present in the West, but it was never emphasized. Many a little village church in Europe and in the Americas is to this day vibrant with a spiritual presence that has been invoked by the prayers and meditations of the devout over the centuries. And many a Western saint has realized God without worrying in the least about abstract philosophical problems. But the dominant mood of Western culture has been one of materialism and scepticism, a mood that has prevailed since Western civilization began with the Greeks. From Plato and Aristotle on, reason has dominated Western man's efforts to solve the riddles of life, and sense experience was emphasized by the Greek and Roman materialists, Leucippus, Democritus, Epicurus, and Lucretius, but reason was important for them too. There was much controversy as to which was more important, reason or sense experience. In

the Middle Ages, though the battle between sense experience and reason went on in the scholastic struggle between 'nominalism' and 'realism', faith replaced reason as the main method or instrument for reaching truth, not a living faith based on mystic experience but a static faith that led nowhere because it was dictated by the rigid orthodoxy of a dogmatic church. After the Renaissance and the Reformation threw off that yoke to some extent, reason and sense experience again took up their age-old battle for supremacy. Neither won. The battle only produced a sterile scepticism that resulted in the strange attempt at compromise by Kant.

I call Kant's compromise 'strange' because Kant himself was completely ambivalent about the whole problem, and he produced monster with two heads pulling in opposite ways from each other. He wanted to construct something positive, but he ended up with something completely negative. What he set out to do was to establish a firm basis for modern science; what he actually did was to cast doubt not only on science but on morality and religion as well. In his search for certainty in all fields he pulled the rug out from under all certainty. Like a blind man groping for a path in a primeval jungle he found nothing. In spite of the growing scepticism in philosophy, confidence exuded from every pore of the 18th century Western man. It was the age of reason, and of budding science and industry. Kant wanted to produce a philosophy that would justify this optimism in the face of the growing philosophical scepticism. But he couldn't produce it. Scepticism won in Kant's system, but not completely. Reason and sense experience also won limited victories. It was compromise all the way around. And like all compromises, no one was very happy with it.

What Kant finally drew up, like an arbitration agreement among opposing parties,

was that sense experience and reason, both. tell us all we know of the external world, but they do not tell us the ultimate truth, since all they reveal to us is moulded by the forms of the senses and reason, like cookie cutters that cut the dough into shapes before we ever see it, so that all we know of the dough is the shapes of the cookie cutters. The dough as it is in itself we can never know. This is a faint reflection of the Taoist, Sāṃkhyan, Buddhist, and Vedantic views, but Kant says that not only matter or the 'thing-in-itself' is in principle unknowable, but also the soul-in-itself (the 'transcendental unity of apperception') and God were also unknowable. The transcendental soul we can *postulate* as the unity of the individual knower, and God we can *postulate* as the ultimate ground for all existences and the ground for the moral order as well, that is, as the rewarder and punisher of good and evil deeds after death, but neither the soul-in-itself nor God can be proved or known by reason or experience at all. This view of Kant's left the arrogance of both the empiricists and the rationalists in shambles, as well as the arrogance of Western man.

Kant shocked and changed the Western world, but that world found ways of forgetting him because his picture of human life was too painful to contemplate. The 19th century was born into this world of Kant, but already the scene was changing. What Kant's view amounted to was that what cannot in principle be known is only a kind of maya, a vague 'beyond' that can make no conceivable difference to us. If we postulate this unknowable something as reality, then what we do 'know' through the senses and reason is itself only maya and we have no knowledge of anything at all. And if not only matter is in principle unknowable but also the soul and God, then we are indeed reduced to a limbo of total unknowing than which there could be no

greater hell. Kant is like one who tries to reach the stars in a spaceship, and voyages into space until his fuel is burnt out, where he drifts forever, a Flying Dutchman of the modern West lost in the outer darkness. Fortunately, perhaps, most man never heard of Kant, and probably could not have understood him if they had. Among intellectuals Kant was soon forgotten, though his effect lingered long. Every philosopher since Kant has tried to answer him and each one thought he had, but no one succeeded until Swamiji. Science and industry created enough new practical problems to bury him in oblivion. The romantic movement of the late 18th and early 19th centuries created a diversion by trying to answer the Kantian problem in a new way: by urging emotion as the primary instrument of knowledge. Through emotion, the romantics said, we could find truth better than by reason or the senses by themselves. They went far beyond Kant and pointed up the burning question: how can we pierce the veil of nature by the love of beauty and reach God, the indwelling spirit of nature? Shelley's poem 'Hymn to Intellectual Beauty', and Keats' poem 'Ode to a Nightingale' and 'Ode on a Grecian Urn' express the romantic yearning for the truth which is beauty, and the despair at not ever being able to attain more than fleeting glimpses of it. It would take a bigger man than any of them to answer that problem, and that man was to be Swamiji, and answer it he did. But what the romantic movement did was to change the rules and play a new game entirely. Kant was thus left behind, 'an old man in a dry month, ... waiting for rain', as the poet T. S. Eliot was later to epitomize the modern age.<sup>7</sup> Modern man has forgotten about Kant, but he carries Kantianism to its

7. T. S. Eliot, *The Complete Poems and Plays*, 'Gerontion' (New York: Harcourt, Brace & World, 1952) p. 21.

logical conclusion by finding God to be not needed any more.

But there was much more to the needs of the West in Swamiji's day than this. The God that many in the West felt was no longer needed was not so much Kant's abstract postulate for the possibility of morality, nor the loving Father as taught by Jesus, but the harsh lawgiver, judge, and condemner of souls that has dominated Western religions from ancient times. The religions of the West have always been dualistic religions, not only in the sense of teaching a dualism between God and the individual soul, but in a much deeper sense. All Western religions have always taught the terrifying dualism of both God and the Devil, both Heaven and Hell, both the Holy and the unholy, both white and black magic, and, most terrifying of all, the exclusive alternative of either salvation or damnation, a damnation which lasts—*forever*. No spiritual prospect could be more horrifying. For those who are damned, hell is an eternity of regrets and remorse, to say nothing of unmitigated torture, with no hope of redemption—*ever*. For the damned and doomed, the Redeemer does not live at all. Thus for centuries and centuries Western cultures laboured and agonized under this lifelong threat held over them by the various ecclesiastical authorities, lifelong because it was held over each penitent's head from birth to death. Since the human condition is what it is, that is, we are universally vulnerable to temptations of all sorts, who could ever be certain of salvation under the inextricably intricate rules set up by the various ecclesiastical bodies? And without the hope of salvation, what life is worth living? For the whole history of Western civilization the threat of damnation has yawned its earthquake chasms beneath everyone's feet without exception, and no one has felt safe from it. This religious terrorism was above all what the West needed to be saved from.

On the American scene we have the Western preoccupation with sin and damnation exemplified in two writers, Nathaniel Hawthorne and Mark Twain. Hawthorne was obsessed with the Puritanical obsession with sin, particularly that of adultery. He saw no way out of the tangled maze of brooding on sin until the very brooding becomes the worst sin of all. He expresses man's inextricable involvement in sin in his story 'The Birthmark', in which the attempt to remove a symbolic birthmark from an otherwise blemishless face results in the patient's death. Twain, though outwardly antireligious, was inwardly just as religious as Hawthorne, and just as obsessed with sin. But for him sin was mostly man's inhumanity to man. His vituperative castigations of the whole human race on the cruelty shown by all men to each other is as bitter and obsessive as any of Hawthorne's morbid broodings. His satires on all Western religions reveal that the West taught a cruel Devil and a still more cruel God. Like Hawthorne he saw no way out. Each writer was self-condemned to his own private hell from which he never escaped, for each saw humanity as universally condemned to suffering. Both writers express the total sense of the blindness of the 'lost generations' of the 19th century who groped in the dark without a ray of light to guide them. Light was badly needed in the West, a genuine spiritual sunrise, not a false, phosphorescent marshglow.

Yes, there was a real need, an agonizing need for something. But before Swamiji came, no one seemed to know just what was needed. Many felt nothing was needed, didn't we have everything, such as science and industry, a new continent we Americans had conquered, and conquests and colonies for England and Europe all over the rest of the world? The world-wide picture of the 'white man's burden' was complete—except for just one thing: the West, for all its busybodying around on a world-wide scale,

knew not one thing about the cultures and religions of any of the peoples it so cavalierly dominated. Towards the end of the 19th century the culture of the West was drifting in a shoreless void and did not even know that it drifted. But drift it did, lost, eyeless, and apparently forsaken.

There are two famous statues in the world. They are famous not only as great works of art but also as highly significant symbols. One is the great Buddha of Kamakura, Japan; the other is Rodin's 'The Thinker'. The Buddha statue expresses the infinite serenity and exalted wisdom and compassion not only of the Buddha but of all Oriental religion. The Rodin statue of 'The Thinker' epitomizes the Western manner of life and philosophy. The Buddha statue represents the Buddha in meditation, but it is the serene, super-conscious meditation taught in the East. Rodin's statue, on the other hand, is very expressive of what meditation means to the West: a strenuous, active kind of discursive thinking, a battleground of ideas. The Buddha is sitting upright, balanced, poised, seemingly floating in the infinite peace of nirvana. The Thinker of Rodin is also seated, but is leaning forward, elbow on knee, chin on a clenched hand, with furrowed brow, eyes staring forward fiercely into space. He is muscular like an athlete, and his attitude of puzzlement suggests the restlessness and the struggle of wrestling with mental problems that perhaps never will be solved. He is a contender, a debater, a fighter, not a man of peace. Buddha represents the ultimate fulfilment, the peace that passeth understanding.

I do not mean to say that the East has not had its share of active warriors—look at Arjuna, and all his friends and relations. But the warriors and kings of the East often had the advantage of the close friendship and wise counselling of some incarnation of God such as Arjuna had in Kṛṣṇa, or some illumined sage such as King Janaka had in Yājñavalkya. That is the difference: in the East warriors and kings were often guided by illumined seers and sometimes were themselves illumined, as was King Janaka, or sometimes, even, were incarnations of God, as was King Rāma. Whether these stories are myths or not makes no difference. They have flown high as the exalted ideals of the East for countless centuries.

Kipling said, 'East is East, and West is West, and never the twain shall meet,' and perhaps he was right, up to a certain point of time—but they met, during Kipling's lifetime, in 1893, when Swami Vivekananda came to speak at the Parliament of Religions in Chicago. The Buddha of the East met the Thinker of the West—and what a fateful meeting that was, at least for the West! His coming changed the course of human history, for it revealed that the West was no longer forsaken by hope.<sup>8</sup>

*(To be concluded)*

8. For a more detailed and scholarly discussion of the general climate of opinion in the West preceding Swami's visit, see Gargi (Marie Louise Burke), 'Science, Religion, and Swami Vivekananda', *Prabuddha Bharata*, March, 1979, pp. 95-102, and April, pp. 169-182. For a general history of Western philosophy see B. A. G. Fuller, *A History of Philosophy*, (New York: Henry Holt & Co., 1952).

# ॥ लघुविवेकानन्दम् ॥

## VIVEKANANDA—A BRIEF PROFILE

SWAMI MUKHYANANDA

(१)

I

रामायणमहाकाव्ये रघुवंशगतमपि ।  
विवेकानन्दसादृश्यां दृष्ट्वा राघववर्णनाम् ॥१॥

तादृशाजन्मशुद्धस्य चाफलोदयकर्मिणः ।  
आसमुद्रपरिव्राजश्चाविश्वचरितार्थिनः ॥२॥

सद्गुणैः सुमनाभूत्वा चापलाय प्रचोदितः ।  
स्वान्तःसुखाय तु स्तोत्रं लघुमेतत् करोमि वै ॥३॥

मन्दः स्फूर्तिवशोभूत्वा स्तोतुकामो महात्मनः ।  
महत्लभ्यां क्रियासिद्धौ करिष्याम्यतिसाहसम् ॥४॥

अथवा कृतवाग्द्वारे स्वकाव्ये पूर्वसूरिभिः ।  
पुष्पेषुप्रोतसूत्रस्य सादृश्येनास्ति मे कृतिः ॥५॥  
वाल्मीकि-कालिदासाभ्यां श्लोकान्-शब्दान्-समाहृतान् ।  
ग्रथित्वात्र च मालायामर्पयामि तयोः कृते ॥६॥

(२)

II

दत्ताख्यवंशसंभूतो विश्वनाथ इति श्रुतः ।  
श्रीभुवनेश्वरीख्याता भार्या तस्य पतिव्रता ॥७॥

तस्या विशुद्धचित्तायाः प्रसूतः शुद्धिमत्तरः ।  
नरेन्द्रनाथबालार्को दीप्यन् सर्वा महीमिव ॥८॥

1. In the great epic poem *Rāmāyaṇa* (by Vālmīki) and in the *Raghuvamśa* (of Kālidāsa) (both in Sanskrit) finding some descriptions of Śrī Rāma (Rāghava) fittingly applicable to Vivekananda ;—

2. Who, like Śrī Rāma, was pure from birth and always strove till all work bore fruit, and, like him, wandered the earth and crossed the seas to accomplish his world-mission ;—

3. Thrilled by (these and other of) his great qualities and impelled by fancy, for my own inner delight do I compose this brief hymn.

4. Though I am no scholar, inspired with the thought of singing the glories of the Great One, I am entering on this task rashly, a task which only the accomplished ones can achieve.

5. However, my work is simply like the string that threads the wordy-blossoms from the works of the great poets of old.

6. Gathering the beautiful verses and words (applicable to Vivekananda) from the works of Vālmīki and Kālidāsa, I am fastening this poetic wreath and dedicate it in their name.

7. In the family line of the Dattas was born the esteemed Vishwanath, who had a chaste and devoted wife in Sri Bhuvaneswari Devi.

8. To her of pure and noble heart was born Narendranath, who was purer still, as if he were the morning sun lighting up the whole world.

कालिकानगरीजातो रामकृष्णपदाश्रितः ।  
स्वलीलया जगत्त्रातुमाविर्भूतमहेश्वरः ॥६॥

बाल्यैवाधिगतो विद्या यौवने साधनारतः ।  
प्रीढे लोकहितेमग्नः स्वेच्छयान्ते दिवंगतः ॥१०॥

विवेकानन्दनाम्नामौ रघुनाथ इवापरः ।  
उत्तीर्य सलिलं सिन्धोः धर्मसंस्थापने रतः ॥११॥

(३)

नातिदीर्घसुगात्रश्च दृढग्रीवो महाहनुः ।  
सुशिरा सुविशालाक्षः सुललाटः सुविक्रमः ॥१२॥

महोरस्को वृषस्कन्धः शालप्रांशुर्महाभुजः ।  
आत्मकर्मक्षमं देहं विश्वधर्मं इवाश्रितः ॥१३॥

समः समविभक्तांगः स्निग्धवर्णः प्रतापवान् ।  
सर्वलक्षणसंपन्नश्चाष्टादशविभूतिमान् ॥१४॥

संगीत-वाद्य-निष्णातो मनोज्ञस्तत्त्वचिन्तकः ।  
आर्यः सर्वसमश्चैव सदैव प्रियदर्शनः ॥१५॥

नियतात्मा महावीर्यो द्युतिमान् धृतिमान् वशी ।  
बुद्धिमान् नीतिमान् वाग्मी सत्यान्वेषी बृहद्ब्रतः ॥१६॥

9. Born and brought up in the city of Kālī (Kālī-ghātā—Kālī-kātā—Cal-cutta), and taking recourse to the feet of Sri Rama-krishna, he was verily the great Śiva (cf. his first name was Vireswara, which is an epithet of Śiva) manifested to save the world by his sportive activities.

10. In the boyhood itself he acquired all the learning, and in youth he practised all the spiritual disciplines. As an adult he engaged himself in the welfare of the world, and in the end he gave up his body by self-will.

11. Donning the name of Vivekananda, like a second Śrī Rāma (Raghunātha) he crossed the oceans and engaged himself in the establishment of *dharma* (ethical and religio-spiritual life based on Supreme Truth).

III

12. Of a medium stature, he was handsome in limbs, with a firm neck, big jaws, comely head, large eyes, broad forehead, and an impressive gait.

13. He had a broad chest, powerful shoulders, long and mighty arms, as if his world-mission had found in his frame a fitting shelter.

14. Proportionate with well-matched limbs, he was glossy in complexion and mighty. He was endowed with all the good characteristics and the eighteen Powers of Glory (*vibhūti*).

15. An expert both in vocal and instrumental music, he was charming in manners and a profound thinker. He was noble and same-sighted towards all, and always pleasing to behold.

16. He was self-controlled, great in vigour, brilliant, and persevering. He was masterly, wise, tactful, an impressive orator, and a Truth seeker vowed to lifelong celibacy.



(४)

IV

स च सर्वगुणोपेतो गुरोः प्रीतिविवर्धनः ।  
नरावतार एवासी नारायणसखास्मृतः ॥१७॥

आकारसदृशप्रज्ञः प्रज्ञयासदृशागमः ।  
आगमैः सदृशारंभश्चारभमदृशोदयः ॥१८॥

धर्मज्ञः सत्यसन्धश्च सर्वभूतहिते रतः ।  
यशस्वी ज्ञानमपन्नः शुचिर्दक्षः समाधिमान् ॥१९॥

भक्तिमान् ध्यानयोगी च कर्मयोगपरायणः ।  
अद्वैतानुभवे तिष्ठन् सर्वत्र समदर्शनः ॥२०॥

वेदविज्ञानसंपन्नः आत्मतत्त्वविशारदः ।  
सर्वशास्त्रार्थतत्त्वज्ञः स्मृतिमान् प्रतिभानवान् ॥२१॥

सारग्राही कृतज्ञश्च नाभिमानी दृढव्रतः ।  
चारित्र्येण च संयुक्तः समर्थोऽनभ्यसूयकः ॥२२॥

सर्वलोकप्रियः साधुरदीनात्मा विचक्षणः ।  
सर्वदाभिगतः सद्भिः समुद्र इव सिन्धुभिः ॥२३॥

17. Endowed with all such virtues endearing to his Guru (Sri Ramakrishna), he was verily looked upon as the incarnation of Nara (the ideal man or sage Nara—cf. his name Narendranath means Supreme Lord of men) the (inseparable) companion of Nārāyaṇa (the Supreme Being).

18. His wisdom matched his form, and his learning matched his wisdom; his deeds matched his learning, and the results matched his deeds.

19. He had insight into *dharma* and was devoted to Truth. He always engaged himself in the good of all beings. He was illustrious, full of spiritual wisdom, pure, dexterous, and his mind was always attuned to the Divine Reality (*samādhi-mān*).

20. He was full of Bhakti (devotion to the Supreme Divine), perfect in meditation, and a great Karma Yogi; and being established in the Advaitic (Oneness of all Existence) realization, he looked upon all with an equal vision.

21 Well-versed in both Vedic (spiritual) knowledge and (secular) science, he was a true knower of the science of the Self (Atman). He was also a knower of the essence, of all the sciences (śāstras), keen in memory, and was full of brilliance.

22. He was appreciative of essential beauty or goodness (*sāra*) wherever found and was ever grateful, without self-conceit, firm of vow and character, highly capable, and without the least envy.

23. Being saintly, high-minded, perspicacious, he was loved by all, and was ever approached by the good like the rivers flowing towards the sea.

(५)

V

हनुमत्सदृशो भक्त्यां ज्ञाने शंकरसन्निभः ।  
भावे तु स्वगुरोर्मूर्तिकारुण्ये बुद्ध' एव च ॥२४॥

सदाशिवसमो मन्यौ क्षमया पृथिवीसमः ।  
रन्तिदेव इव त्यागे सत्ये धर्म इवापरः ॥२५॥

समुद्र इव गांभीर्ये धैर्येण हिमवानिव ।  
वैशाल्ये नभसंकाशः मदा मन्यपराक्रमः ॥२६॥

रक्षिता सत्यधर्मस्य भारतस्य च रक्षिता ।  
रक्षिता जीवलोकस्य विश्वधर्मस्य रक्षिता ॥२७॥

वेदान्तकेमरी साक्षादटन् सर्वत्रमेदिनीम् ।  
अगर्जदुत्तिष्ठोत्तिष्ठ लोका जाग्रत जाग्रत ॥२८॥

24. He was like unto Hanumān in devotion, like (Ācārya) Śaṅkara in knowledge, in divine sentiments he was a replica of his Guru, and in compassion he was like the very Buddha.

25. In righteous indignation he was like unto Sadāśiva (the ever auspicious one), in forbearance like the earth, in self-sacrifice like Rantideva (of the Bhāgavatam) and in devotion to Truth like Dharma-incarnate.

26. In profundity he was like the ocean, in firmness like the Himālayas, in breadth of vision like the sky, and was ever unflinching in his prowess.

27. He was the protector of Truth and Dharma, and the saviour of holy Bhārat (India); he was the saviour of all beings and protector of world-religion (vīśva-dharma).

28. He was a veritable lion of Vedānta, who, wandering the world over, gave the clarion call to all (to assert the divine Self within) roaring repeatedly 'Awake, Arise' (and stop not till the goal is reached).

(६)

VI

अमृतस्य पुत्राः शृण्वन्तिवत्थं संबोधयन्नपि ।  
अश्रावयद्वेदवाणी परां श्रेयस्करी शुभाम् ॥२९॥

ज्ञान-विज्ञान-संयुक्तां सर्वाभयप्रदायिनीम् ।  
तमसः पारमात्मानं महान्तं प्राप्यकारिणीम् ॥३०॥

तत्त्वमसि महावाक्यं जीवस्य शिवरूपताम् ।  
आत्मनोऽपापविद्वत्त्वमित्यादीन्युपदिष्टवान् ॥३१॥

29. 'Hear, Ye children of immortal bliss', addressing them thus he poured out into their ears the auspicious words of the Vedas, conducive to the Highest Good (and which are)—

30. Imbued with secular and spiritual science, and which, assuring fearlessness to all, lead all to the Supreme Self beyond all darkness of ignorance.

31. He taught them the great Vedic dictum (*mahā-vākya*) 'That thou art', that 'Jīva is Śiva' (the soul is the Supreme Spirit) in essence, the Self (Atman) is ever untouched by sin and evil, and many other profound ideas —

निर्गुणं सगुणं चैव ब्रह्मतत्त्वमशेषतः ।  
मायां च सृष्टितत्त्वं च वैज्ञानिकमतानुगम् ॥३२॥

कर्मतत्त्वाखिलं चैव पुनर्जन्मादिकं च वै ।  
बन्धं मोक्षं च जीवानामीश्वरानुग्रहं तथा ॥३३॥

निसर्गस्यापि वैचित्र्यं अखण्डाद्वैतवस्तुनि ।  
अविभक्तं च सर्वेषु यद्विभक्तमिव स्थितम् ॥३४॥

एकमेव हि सद्वस्तु विप्रैस्तु मुविशारदैः ।  
किमर्थं हि समुक्तं स्यात् बहुधानामरूपतः ॥३५॥

नानात्वेस्थितमेकत्वं धर्मं च सार्वभौमिकम् ।  
परमेशस्य चैकत्वं सर्वधर्मसमन्वयम् ॥३६॥

ईशावतारतत्त्वं च सर्वमुक्त्वा सविस्तरम् ।  
ईशसंदर्शनार्थं तु चतुर्योगान् प्रदिष्टवान् ॥३७॥

(७)

योगं विज्ञानसंयुक्तं भक्तियोगं मुधान्वितम् ।  
दिव्यात्मभावसंपन्नं ज्ञानयोगं दिवाकरम् ॥३८॥

कर्मयोगं विशेषेण जीवसेवादिसंयुतम् ।  
सानुष्ठानिकवेदान्तं सर्वशक्तिप्रदं शिवम् ॥३९॥

सर्वत्रसमताभावमाचंडालजनेष्वपि ।  
दरिद्रेषु च मूर्खेषु नारायणमतिस्तथा ॥४०॥

समुत्थानं च नारीणां जनताभ्युदयं परम् ।  
भारताभ्युदयं सम्यङ्-नवविश्वोदयं शुभम् ॥४१॥

32. All about the science of Brahman (the Supreme Infinite spiritual reality) both in its personal and impersonal aspects, about (its imponderable power) maya, the science of (Vedic) cosmology, which is in harmony with modern science ;—

33. The science of Karma in its entirety along with the doctrine of rebirth, the bondage and liberation of Jīvas (souls) and the grace of God ;—

34. The manifestation of the diversified nature on the substratum of the indivisible non-dual Reality which, though undivided, exists in all as if divided ;—

35. Why the Supreme Reality, which is verily one, is described by the great learned sages under many different names and forms ;—

36. The ever-present unity in diversity, universal religion, oneness of the Supreme Being, and the harmony of religions ;—

37. And the doctrine of the divine incarnation (Avatāra) etc.—. Having expounded all these topics elaborately, he showed them the four main Yogic paths for the realization of the divine.

## VII

38. He taught them the Rāja-Yoga which is highly scientific, Bhakti-Yoga which is nectarean in its practice, Jñāna-Yoga which illumines the mind and reveals the divinity of the Self ;—

39. And particularly Karma-Yoga which inculcates the service to Jīvas as Śiva (Divine Spirit). Further he taught the practical Vedānta which leads to the good of all and endows one with all strength ;—

40. Equality of attitude towards all down to the lowest outcaste (*candāla*) and seeing Nārāyaṇa (God) in the poor and the foolish too ;—

41. The thorough uplift of women and the elevation of the masses; the all-round raising up of India and the ushering in of a happy New World.

एवं देशविदेशेषु, जातिलिगाद्यभेदतः ।  
बोधयामास सद्धर्ममुच्चावचजनेष्वपि ॥४२॥

(८)

धर्मदिग्विजयी वीरो यतिवर्यो महामतिः ।  
पूजितः सुष्ठु सर्वत्र पंडितैरपि पामरैः ॥४३॥

भारते पुनरावर्त्य अग्निमन्त्रैः प्रचोदयन् ।  
प्रसुप्तलोकमुद्बोध्य देशोत्थाने न्ययोजयत् ॥४४॥  
भारतस्य च माहात्म्यं तस्य स्वर्णयुगानि च ।  
ईश्वरादिष्टकार्यं यदात्मज्योतिप्रकाशनम् ॥४५॥

तस्य दिव्यभविष्य च सर्व वै समुदीरयन् ।  
कृत्वा सर्वान् समुत्साहान् रेमे युगप्रवर्तकः ॥४६॥

इत्थमुपदिश्य सर्वत्र कृतार्थः स जनप्रियः ।  
श्रीरामकृष्णदेवस्य निर्देश निरवर्तयत् ॥४७॥

(९)

प्राच्य-पाश्चात्यदेशस्थैः सच्छिष्यैः सुसमावृतः ।  
ऋषिगुरुभ्रातृभिर्युक्तो गुरुभक्तैश्च संयुतः ॥४८॥

स्थापयामास गंगायां विश्वधर्मप्रचारकम् ।  
बेलूडे यतिसंस्थानं रामकृष्णमठाभिधम् ॥४९॥

तस्य शाखा-प्रशाखाश्च भूमण्डलसमावृताः ।  
श्रीरामकृष्णदेवस्तु मठानावृत्य राजते ॥५०॥

42. Thus in all the lands near and far, irrespective of caste, creed, or sex, etc., he taught the beneficent Dharma (Sad-Dharma) to all the people high or low.

## VIII

43. A hero of spiritual conquest of the world, he, the best of monks with a mighty mind, was highly honoured everywhere both by the scholars and the laity.

44. Returning to India he roused up the people with fiery words and inspired them to work for the uplift of the country.

45. He pictured before them the greatness of India and its past golden ages, and pointed to the God-given historic mission of India to shed the divine light of the Atman on the world.

46. And he painted before them the luminous future awaiting the country. Further, depicting everything (for the all-round regeneration of India) and enthusing all immensely, he, the New-Age-Maker (Yuga-pravartaka), rejoiced.

47. Thus teaching everywhere, he, the beloved of the people, felt a sense of fulfilment having accomplished the commission of Sri Ramakrishna Deva (to work for the spiritual regeneration of mankind).

## IX

48. Surrounded by his worthy disciples from the East and the West, and in conjunction with his brother-disciples (Guru-bhrātrs) and the devotees of his Guru (Sri Ramakrishna)—

49. He established at the Belur village on the bank of the Ganga (the Headquarters of) the great monastic institution called the Ramakrishna Math, devoted to the propagation of universal religion (Viśva-Dharma).

50. The branches and sub-branches of this great institution have spread all over the globe, and Sri Ramakrishna Deva adorns these Maths as the Presiding Deity.

यतिसंघस्य चोद्देश्यं स्वामिना विशदीकृतः ।  
आत्मनोऽपि च मोक्षार्थं जगतश्च हिताय वै ॥५१॥

एतन्मठस्य चिह्नं तु चतुर्योगसमन्वितम् ।  
तस्य मध्यगतो हंसः द्योतकः परमात्मनः ॥५२॥

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X

श्रीरामकृष्णदेवस्य शक्तिः श्रीसारदामणिः ।  
विवेकादियतिवृन्दः तयोः षोडशपार्षदाः ॥५३॥

विश्वधर्मोपमाकाशे सूर्याचन्द्रमसाविव ।  
शोभनस्तौ सभक्तैश्च शिष्यतारागणावृतौ ॥५४॥

सारदा मातरं चापि रामकृष्णं जगद्गुरुम् ।  
आश्रितान् च तयोः सर्वान् प्रणमामि मुहुर्मुहुः ॥५५॥

सर्वधर्मस्वरूपाय ज्ञानानन्दमुखाय ।  
सर्वावतारयुक्ताय रामकृष्णाय ते नमः ॥५६॥

विश्वमातृस्वरूपिण्यै सर्वदोषापहारिण्यै ।  
करुणारसपूण्यै सारदायै नमो नमः ॥५७॥

विवेकानन्दयोगीन्द्रं सर्वलोकशुभंकरम् ।  
प्रणमामि सदा भक्त्या मुख्यानन्दार्थसिद्धये ॥५८॥

51. The ideal of this monastic Order, the Swami (Vivekananda) has made clear in the motto, '*For one's own spiritual liberation and the good of the world.*'

52. The symbol of this Math depicts the harmonious union of the four Yogas and the Swan in their midst denotes the divine Supreme Atman (to be realized through the Yogas).

53. Sri Saradamani is the Divine-Power (Śakti-consort) of Sri Ramakrishna Deva and the group of monks consisting of Vivekananda and others form their sixteen eternal companions (Pārsadas).

54. In the firmament of universal religion, they two (Sri Ramakrishna and Sri Sarada Devi) shine like the sun and the moon, surrounded by their disciples and devotees like unto stars.

55. I bow down repeatedly to Sri Sarada Devi, the Holy Mother, and Sri Ramakrishna, the world-teacher and to all those who have taken refuge in them.

56. To Sri Ramakrishna, the embodiment of all religions, who showers on all Supreme Knowledge and bliss, and who combines in Himself all the previous incarnations, I offer my salutations.

57. To Sri Sarada Devi, the form of the Universal Mother, who removes all imperfections, whose heart is filled with the milk of compassion for all beings, I offer my salutations repeatedly.

58. I always bow down with devotion to Vivekananda, the Lord of the Yogis, who brings good to all mankind, for the attainment of the objective of Supreme Bliss (*Mukhya-Ananda*).

आषाढमासे गुरुपूर्णिमायां

शताब्दन्यूने द्विसहस्रवर्षे ।

शकाब्दगण्ये गुरुपूजनार्थं

कृतं च स्तोत्रं तु विवेकानन्दम् ॥५६॥

ये पठन्ति त्विदं स्तोत्रं भक्त्या च श्रद्धयान्विताः ।

त्यक्त्वा हृदयदोर्बल्यं लभन्ते जयमंगलम् ॥६०॥

॥ ॐ श्रीसारदारामकृष्णसमेतविवेकानन्दार्पणमस्तु ॥

59. In the month of Āṣāḍha on the Guru-Pūrṇimā day (the full-moon day dedicated to the Guru), in the Śaka-year nineteen hundred (20th July 1978), this brief hymn on Vivekananda (*Laghu-Vivekanandam* in Sanskrit) was composed as a homage to my worthy Guru (Swami Virajananda, an eminent disciple of Vivekananda).

60. Those who recite this hymn full of faith and devotion will ever attain success (in spiritual life) and welfare, giving up all faint-heartedness.

Let this hymn be an offering unto Vivekananda ever conjoined with Sri Sarada-Ramakrishna

*The Lamps that Vivekananda Lighted*

SWAMI ATMANANDA

SWAMI MUKTINATHANANDA

Srimat Swami Brahmanandaji Maharaj once told one of his disciples, 'It is a rare good fortune to serve and be in the company of great soul like Atmananda.'<sup>1</sup> Swami Bobhananda, an eminent disciple of Swami Vivekananda, wrote from New York in 1950 :

Swami Atmananda was one among the chief sannyasin disciples of Swami Vivekananda. It will not be improper to say that he was the foremost in renunciation, forbearance and dispassion. He had a sweet tongue and a quiet nature.... His holy life remains as a glowing example before us. It is like the polestar to those who tread the path of religion. On going

through the biography of Swami Atmananda the reader will feel blessed and gratified.<sup>2</sup>

Let us, then, study the life of such an illustrious personage and see for ourselves the truth of the above statements.

Swami Atmananda's earlier name was Govinda Chandra Shukul. He was born in a pious Brahmin family around 1868. His ancestral home was in the district of Purnea in Bihar. Perhaps the family's original surname was 'Shukla' which later on became modified into Shukul. His grandfather, Sri Yugal Kishore Shukul, moved to the district of Malda in North Bengal and settled there. Yugal Kishore had two sons : Guruprasad and Durgaprasad. Govinda was the eldest

1. Karunananda, Swami, 'Brahmalin Swami Atmananda', *Udbodhan*, Agrahāyaṇ, 1330 B.S., p. 642.

2. Bodhananda, Swami, 'Swami Atmananda', *Udbodhan*, Āṣāḍ, 1357 B.S., p. 320-21.

son of Durgaprasad. Durgaprasad built a house in Devipur<sup>3</sup> village of Malda district where Govinda was born.

Govinda was brought up under the care of his uncle, Guruprasad, a devout Brahmin who was the chief priest in the temple of the king of Chanchal in Malda district. Daily worship of the Goddess Annapūrṇā and Govindaji was performed in the temple. Guruprasad kept his nephew Govinda near him and took charge of his training and education. Hindi was his mother tongue but he could speak Bengali fluently, though with a Hindi accent. Govinda used to assist his uncle in worship; Guruprasad taught him religious rites and encouraged him to study holy books. Under the able guidance of his pious uncle, Govinda grew up acquiring all-round distinction. He was possessed of a sharp intellect, sweet behaviour and a contemplative temperament. The king of Chanchal became fascinated by this bright young boy, and came forward to bear all his educational expenses. Govinda passed the Entrance Examination in 1890 from the local high school. He was awarded a Government scholarship for his brilliant success. In accordance with the then prevalent custom of child-marriage, Govinda was married at an early age.

Govinda moved to Calcutta for higher studies and got admitted into Ripon College. It was here that he came into close contact with a group of fellow students who later on became the disciples of Swami Vivekananda. They were Sudhir Chandra Chakravarty, Kalikrishna Bose, Khagendra Nath Chatterjee, Haripada Chatterjee, and Sushil Chandra Chakravarty, who later on took

holy orders to become Swamis Shuddhananda, Virajananda, Vimalananda, Bodhananda and Prakashananda respectively.<sup>4</sup> All except Sudhir were students of Ripon College where Sri Mahendra Nath Gupta or 'M', the celebrated recorder of the *Gospel of Sri Ramakrishna*, was a professor at that time. Thus the group came to know about the wonderful life and teachings of Sri Ramakrishna and in addition, became acquainted with his lay as well as monastic disciples. Sometimes they would make a trip to Dakshineswar and spend long hours in meditation there. At other times they would visit Kankurgachhi and hear about Sri Ramakrishna from Rama Chandra Dutta, a prominent householder disciple of Sri Ramakrishna. They also met Manmohan Mitra, Girish Chandra Ghosh and other lay devotees of the Master. But it was 'M' who directed them to visit Baranagore monastery, meet the Sannyasin disciples of the Master and imbibe their blazing spirit of renunciation. As the group started frequenting the Baranagore Math, they were amazed to see the austere life led by the Master's disciples and their intense longing for God realization.

In the meantime Govinda passed the F.A. (First Arts) Examination with distinction and joined the B.A. course of the same college. However his mind was becoming more and more restless for realizing God in this very life. He met the Holy Mother, Sri Sarada Devi, at Jayrambati and prayed to her with a sincere heart. The Holy Mother blessed him with initiation which opened a new chapter in his spiritual life. He would spend most of his time in japa, meditation and holy discussions. Around this time he moved to the house of one of his dear friends, Khagen (later Swami Vimalananda). He also started coaching a few school students free of charge. In

3. Abjajananda, Swami, *Swamijīr Padapīṇṭe* (Bengali) (Belur Math: Saradapitha, 1964) p. 142.

However, according to Swami Jagadīswarananda, Govinda's parental village was Harischandrapur in Malda district. Vide: *Udbodhan*, Bhādra, 1356 B. S., p. 426.

4. Gambhirananda, Swami, *History of the Ramakrishna Math and Mission*, (Calcutta Advaita Ashrama, 1957) p. 68.

order to intensify his spiritual quest he used to go to Dakshineswar temple and stay there for a few days, as advised by Swami Trigunatitananda, a direct disciple of Sri Ramakrishna. He would beg his food from the Kali Temple and spend the whole day in divine contemplation. At this time the Math at Baranagore was shifted to Alambazar. Govinda would occasionally visit the Alambazar Math for spiritual guidance and inspiration. Swami Ramakrishnananda encouraged him very much and finally instructed him to permanently stay in the Math. Accordingly, Govinda joined the Alambazar Math in 1896.

This news soon reached Govinda's home. His relations tried their best to bring him back home, but to no avail. At last they approached the rajah of Chanchal and sought his help. The rajah sent a letter to Govinda at Alambazar Math requesting him to come immediately to Chanchal at least for a couple of days to help him out of some urgent personal problem concerning his estate. Since Govinda had had his education with the financial assistance provided by the rajah, he was ever grateful to the latter. So he at once responded to the rajah's call and rushed to his help without suspecting anything. But the rajah did not even mention anything about his personal problems. Instead he started advising him not to renounce the world. He reminded Govinda of his duties towards his family, and elaborated the sad consequences if he failed to perform them. Govinda soon understood the whole trick. Filled as he was with an intense longing to realize God, he was not in a position to appreciate all these counsels. Then his weeping young wife, Brahmayi Devi, was brought to his presence, but he remained unaffected. At last the rajah became very angry, and using harsh words he threatened to imprison him. Fearless as he always was, Govinda did not enter into any quarrel but quietly fled from the palace at the dead of night and returned

straight to the Alambazar Math. Nevertheless, he arranged to get his wife initiated by the Holy Mother. Brahmayi Devi lived long and led a pure life devoted to prayer, worship and other devotional practices.

Govinda had a weak physique from his childhood, and used to suffer now and then from dyspepsia. This made him think that his body was unfit for intense spiritual practices. He therefore resolved to dedicate his 'worthless body' to a great cause so that he might be endowed with a better body in the future birth. Thus at Alambazar Math Govinda zealously participated in the various activities of the monastery besides his regular spiritual practices. Since most of the inmates were senior to him he had to obey the orders of all; on the other hand, he had none to command. He thus learned self-reliance which became so deep-rooted that he never allowed anybody to do any personal service to him throughout his life. Swami Ramakrishnananda used to manage all the affairs of the Math at that time. He was specially affectionate to young Govinda who in turn was very eager to assist him. In later years Govinda would speak about the rigorous training given by Swami Ramakrishnananda: 'We did not wear our clothes loose as you do nowadays. We had to tie our clothes tightly and remain alert from early morning till 12 noon. We knew not when the orders would come. When he (Ramakrishnananda) issued orders, we had to carry them out immediately. If there was the slightest delay or imperfection, he would not spare us.'<sup>5</sup> It was owing to this training under Swami Ramakrishnananda that Govinda attained precision in every action.

It was the year 1897. After preaching Vedanta in the West Swamiji returned to Calcutta and stayed at the Alambazar Math. This created a great stir among the inmates

5. Jagadiswarananda, Swami, 'Swami Atmananda-II', *Udhodhan*, Kārtik, 1356 B.S., p. 533.



of the Math. In those days Govinda used to be addressed by others as 'Shukul Māhashay' or simply 'Shukul'. One day Swamiji called him and suddenly asked, 'Hallo, Shukul, have you come here to become a monk?' Govinda replied at once, 'Sir, I have neither a strong body nor a fit mind to become a monk. If I can sacrifice this rotten body and mind in your service then, I believe, I shall obtain a better body and mind in the next birth. I have come here only with this faith.'<sup>6</sup> Highly pleased with this frank answer, Swamiji exclaimed, 'That's right.' Later Shukul Maharaj used to narrate this incident saying, 'So emphatically did Swamiji utter the words "that's right" a couple of times that they still ring in my ears.' Shortly after this Swamiji blessed Govinda and another Brahmacharin with sannyasa initiation. Govinda's new name was Swami Atmananda while the other person was named Swami Kalyanananda.

Atmananda now had the blessed privilege to be with his Guru. He learnt from Swamiji not only the secrets of the spiritual world but also the details of conduct—how to walk, talk, dress and so on. One day Swamiji was singing devotional songs. Suddenly he told Atmananda, 'Shukul, play on the *tabla*.' Shukul nervously replied, 'I do not know how to play on the *tabla*.' Swamiji admonished him lovingly: 'Strange, you don't know! Come, I shall teach you.'<sup>7</sup> Atmananda started taking lessons on the *tabla* from his Guru and soon became an expert *tabla* player. Later on when Swamiji sang, he accompanied him at the *tabla* on several occasions. He learnt to play the *pakhaj* also. He could not sing very well but loved to hear devotional songs.

Swami Atmananda had an unflinching devotion towards Swamiji for whom he was

prepared to sacrifice everything. Swami Shuddhananda has related an interesting incident: 'He (Atmananda) was a vegetarian from his boyhood. One day in order to test his firmness in this principle, Swamiji gave him a fish curry to eat. As he had a profound respect for his Guru he was about to eat it, notwithstanding his inborn aversion to it, when he was dissuaded from doing so by Swamiji himself.'<sup>8</sup> Another day Swamiji laid some imaginary charges against himself and asked Atmananda, 'Will you still regard me as your guru?' The disciple replied without hesitation, 'You may say or do whatever you like, but you will remain for ever my all in all.' In his later life Atmananda used to say, 'The most precious treasure of a monk's life is his faith in the words of his guru and the scriptures. Again, out of the two, faith in the guru's words is more important.' Regarding Swamiji he used to remark, 'Such a great *ācārya* (teacher) was never born before.'

Swamiji won the hearts of his disciples through his infinite love. An anecdote revealing Swamiji's deep concern for their welfare was told by Atmananda:

Swamiji made a rule that the monks should have no personal belongings. Therefore we used to give everything we had or received to the Math. After returning from Rishikesh I had with me only a water pot and a blanket which also I handed over to the Math cellarer. Soon after this I fell ill. I had no warm clothing to cover myself. Nobody noticed this except Swamiji. He said with regret, 'I made the rule, that is why they have handed over to the Math whatever they had. Now nobody is looking after them. How strange!' Then Swamiji himself brought a good blanket and a pillow and spread them on my bed with his own hands. Since then he forbade us to give away the essential articles.<sup>9</sup>

Once Swamiji asked his young disciples, 'Out of devotion, knowledge, work and

6. Swamiji Padaprānte, p. 147.

7. *ibid*, p. 150.

8. 'The Late Srimat Swami Atmananda', *Prabuddha Bharata*, November 1923, p. 434.

9. *Padaprānte*, p. 168.

meditation, in which subject will you take honours?' Somebody selected devotion, another wanted double honours in knowledge and devotion, a third preferred triple honours in devotion, knowledge and action. Thus it went on while Shukul Maharaj kept quiet with his characteristic gravity. When a brother disciple repeated the question to him, Swamiji himself answered on his behalf, 'He is good in all the four.'<sup>10</sup> How appropriate this epithet was will be clear if we analyze the various aspects of Atmananda's life.

It has already been mentioned that Atmananda had a contemplative temperament and hence meditation had a natural attraction for him. He went to Vrindavan for a few days and lived a life of solitude and contemplation, going out only to beg his food. During this period Swami Turiyananda, then staying in Almora, wrote many encouraging letters to 'Shukul Mahashay' as he addressed Atmananda. A glimpse of his meditative mood may be obtained from the following incident. Once he performed *cāturmāsyā*<sup>11</sup> in Bhuvaneswar. Swami Karunananda was then attending on him. The present Math there had not yet been established. They used to stay in a cottage in the garden-house of a devotee. One day when Atmananda was absorbed in meditation a huge snake entered the room. Karunananda became frightened and shouted to him repeatedly. Atmananda just opened his eyes only to return to his meditation. The snake quietly went out of the room through the window. A similar occurrence illustrating his extraordinary absorption will be presented later.

Atmananda was very efficient in the field of work as well, and whenever a situation demanded it he plunged into action with-

out the least hesitation. For some time he helped Trigunatitanandaji in the publication of the Bengali journal, *Udbodhan*. In 1899, when the whole city of Calcutta was reeling under the plague epidemic, Atmananda rendered memorable service in the relief work organized by Swamiji himself. Along with Sister Nivedita, Atmananda very ably assisted Swami Sadananda who was in charge of the relief operation. Again towards the end of 1900 or in the beginning of 1901, Atmananda was sent to Kishengarh to help Swami Kalyanananda in the work of drought relief. Atmananda would very lovingly perform all these kinds of work in the spirit of service of God in man as preached by Swamiji. He never shrank from any work entrusted to him even if it involved a lot of manual labour. For instance, in his early days at the Belur Math he would knead several kilos of wheat flour single-handed and prepare chapatis for all the inmates.

His devotion to God was of the highest order. He would actually feel the living presence of God in the image of worship. Besides, he was quite an adept in ritualistic worship also. For a long time he performed worship in the main shrine of Belur Math. He was specially trained for this by Swami Premananda himself. His worship was worth seeing, but he remained as humble as ever. If someone praised his mode of worship, he would at once reply, 'What do I know about the worship of the Master? One of his direct disciples dragged me here and made me sit on this seat. That is why I am carrying on the worship. It is extremely difficult to perform the worship of the Master.' On days of special festivals Atmananda used to be the *pūjāri* (worshipper) and Shuddhananda the *tantradhāra* (reader). People used to flock to witness the worship performed by such a wonderful pair. But Atmananda would jocularly say, 'What do we know of worship? The *pūjāri* is lame and the *tantradhāra* is blind.

10. 'Swami Atmananda-I'. *Udbodhan*, Bhādra, 1356 B. S., p. 432.

11. Leading a contemplative life in one place for four consecutive months usually during the rainy season.

It was a grand sight when Shashi Maharaj or Baburam Maharaj performed the worship. Those who used to witness their worship would be filled with devotion. Ah, it is so beneficial to witness such worship.<sup>12</sup> He used to consider the worship of the Master to be a very sacred work. If a monk or Brahmachari engaged in the worship of the Master came to offer salutation to him, he would forbid him saying, 'How fortunate you are! You have got the privilege of serving the Master. The hands with which you worship and serve the Master should not touch the feet of human beings.' Once being asked how to do the ritualistic worship he explained, 'Worship means service. It is to bathe, feed and adorn the Deity with flowers, garlands etc., knowing for certain that He or She is really present.' Shukul Maharaj would be extremely angry if he found anyone chatting while performing the worship or while doing any other work in the shrine. He remonstrated against making any noise near the shrine after the Deity is put to bed at night.

Atmananda was a master in the path of knowledge as well. He realized the truth of the scriptures in his own life. Besides, he had a profound knowledge in Sanskrit grammar and Bengali literature. His exposition of the Gītā, the *Vedānta-Sūtras* and the Upanisads would be not only scholarly but also inspiring. That was why he was asked by Swamiji himself to take scriptural classes for the inmates of the Math.

Thus we find that Atmananda's life was a true reflection of that of his guru—a harmonious combination of knowledge, devotion, work and contemplation. This was crowned with his deep love towards his guru. When Swamiji passed away on the fourth July 1902, Atmananda became overwhelmed with grief. About the condition of his mind at that time he later said : 'After the demise

of Swamiji I lost the desire to remain in this world. Let the body remain or perish—with this resolve I used to wander about hither and thither without caring for food or sleep. I would not enter my room, nor did I feel like talking to anyone. The question of food etc. did not rise in my mind at all.'<sup>13</sup> Swami Shuddhananda has described Atmananda's life during this period as follows : 'After the *mahāsamādhi* of Swamiji he, with another monk of the Order, used to besmear his body with ashes and pass his time mostly in contemplation and meditation in a thatched shed, got up somewhere close to the present memorial temple of his master. Even the night he used to pass there, only coming to the Math to take his midday meal and also to attend the Vedanta class conducted by Swami Saradananda. As for his supper, someone of us would carry a few chapatis for him and leave them at his place.'<sup>14</sup> Afterwards at the request of several monks of the Order he agreed to stay in the Math building. But it took a long time before he could resume his normal activities.

Even after the decease of Swamiji Atmananda felt his presence. One day he disclosed, '... I directly perceived Swamiji the other day. He who is the creator, preserver and destroyer was standing before me ...' He would always keep his bed clean and tidy with a nice sheet spread on it throughout the day, although he used it only at night. On being asked the reason for this he said, 'Occasionally Swamiji used to lie down on my bed at Belur Math. After his passing away one day I saw in a dream that he was laying in my bed. Since then I always keep the bed ready, for I know not when he would come again.'<sup>15</sup>

On the 7th of May 1903 Atmananda was

12. *Padaprānte*, p. 158

13. *ibid*, p. 151-52.

14. *Prabuddha Bharata*, November 1923, p. 434.

15. *Padaprānte*, p. 149.

elected a Trustee of the Belur Math.<sup>16</sup> In 1904 he went to Madras at the urgent request of Shashi Maharaj (Swami Ramakrishnananda) who was then spreading the message of the Master and Swamiji not only in Madras but also in many other parts of South India. Under the guidance of Shashi Maharaj an Ashrama had been established by a group of sincere and enthusiastic devotees at Bangalore. But it was becoming difficult for him to manage the activities of both Madras and Bangalore Centres. Now he asked Atmananda to take charge of the work in Bangalore. Thus Atmananda became the first resident Swami of the Bangalore Ashrama.

He conducted regular classes in a rented building and was for a time assisted by Swamis Vimalananda and Bodhananda. He was at Bangalore for nearly six years and kept going the work of the centre against many odds. He built the present handsome Ashrama by collecting subscriptions. He spoke little in public, but yet exerted a tremendous influence by the life he lived. He is still remembered there for his childlike simplicity, unobtrusive piety, stern renunciation and overflowing love for the rich and the poor alike.<sup>17</sup>

His speeches, though small in number, were simple in language, direct in approach and rich in spiritual content, as the following extract from a speech of his on 'How to Realize God' will show :

As the rays of the sun converged into a focus through a lens reveals everything when projected into the darkest corner, so the mind of man when collected and gathered together becomes so powerful that in whatever direction we may throw it, everything will reveal its secrets by its illumining power. With such a concentrated mind we can realize the highest truth, God Himself. It is true God is in everything but still we do not see Him or feel His presence. Why, because we have not realized Him within ourselves, we have not taken the proper channel

to reach Him. There are so many lanterns, some made of stone, some of wood, some of mud, some of coloured glass. Though a flame is burning in everyone of them we do not see it, because the light is so obscured and coloured in coming through thick material covers. The proper way will be to take advantage of the natural aperture and have a peep at the light within, and this aperture is one's own self, wherein we find the highest manifestation of intelligence. We can easily find out the source of the light which shines within by introspection by throwing our mind inward and searching it out.<sup>18</sup>

Swami Saradananda, the then General Secretary of the Ramakrishna Order requested Atmananda to go to the United States to preach Vedanta. He even sent a telegram to Bangalore in this regard. Atmananda came to Belur Math in obedience to it, but he humbly expressed his unwillingness to go to any foreign country. He was then sent back to Bangalore where he intensified his work. His exalted life and luminous expositions created a great enthusiasm in and around the city. Unfortunately his health, which was never very good, broke down under the strain of six years of pioneering work. He was forced to take rest, and so left Bangalore in the year 1909. The Holy Mother Sri Sarada Devi paid a visit to Rameswaram and two or three other holy places in South India in 1910 for which all arrangements were made by Shashi Maharaj. Atmananda had the privilege of travelling with the Holy Mother, and returned to Belur Math along with her.

The life of Atmananda at the Belur Math was a model for the young inmates. Even the senior monks used to encourage the novices to associate themselves with Atmananda and imbibe his noble qualities. One day a few Brahmacharins who had recently joined the Order were gossiping and mak-

16. *History of the Ramakrishna Math and Mission*, p. 180.

17. *Prabuddha Bharata*, November 1923, p. 435.

18. Atmananda, Swami, 'How to Realize God' in *Brahmavadin* (Madras) June 1904, p. 431, 436-7.

ing merry when Premanandaji arrived there. He affectionately rebuked them. 'When you have joined the Math you should seek the company of Shukul Mahashay and talk to him. You will be immensely benefited. Don't waste time in vain.' Once Prem-anandaji was absent from the Math for a few days. During that period Atmananda was made to take charge of the Math. He was a very strict disciplinarian. Nothing escaped his alert eyes. One day several lady devotees entered the monks' quarters. Shukul Maharaj became extremely annoyed and scolded the person who had let them in, 'You have done a grievous offence today, you have violated a Math rule.'

Atmananda used to take every care to guide the lives of his young brethren. Once he told the young monks, 'Forget the past life completely. Think as if you are born anew in the Math. Read the Sannyāsa *mantras* repeatedly and keep its meaning alive in your minds. Why should a Sannyāsin go home? Though there is a custom that a Sannyāsin should visit his home once after twelve years, it is not applicable to all. Look at Hari Maharaj. The health of a continent monk may break down but his will never gets distorted. It is only due to the lack of self-control that the eyes get sunk.'<sup>19</sup>

In order to keep the spirit of renunciation ablaze among the novices, he used to instruct them, 'Don't write letters home. If you receive any letter from there, tear it up without reading. However, if your mother is alive, you may write to her and read her letters.' He used to stress that everyone should read the Rule of the Math (framed by Swami Vivekananda) everyday. Once he told a monk, 'Memorize the Math rules and, wherever you are, read them now and then together with all the inmates of the Ashrama.'<sup>20</sup> On being asked to sug-

gest the most essential books to be read by members of the Order, he answered, 'At least the Math rules, the two *ārātrika* hymns (sung at the vesper service), the *East and the West* (a small book written by Swami Vivekananda) and the Gita.'<sup>21</sup>

Shukul Maharaj used to urge the young monks to take special care of the monastic buildings and land, which were mostly acquired through the personal labour of Swami Vivekananda. He used to narrate the following touching incident :

One day some one was recklessly driving a nail into the wall of the newly erected Math building. Swamiji remarked, 'He is as it were hitting the nail on my person. I had to give an ounce of blood from my body for every brick of this house.'<sup>22</sup>

Atmananda cherished a very high regard for all the direct disciples of Sri Ramakrishna. If anyone passed a derogatory remark about them, he would become so excited that he could not control himself for quite sometime. He used to tell the monks of the Order, 'They are a part and parcel of the Master. To criticize them is to criticize the Master himself.'<sup>23</sup>

He was ready to give up even his life at the behest of Swami Brahmananda whom he considered no other than Sri Ramakrishna himself. Once he said, 'One cannot understand Maharaj (Brahmanandaji) unless one is highly spiritual. That is, Maharaj dwells at such a high level of the spiritual realm that ordinary minds cannot grasp him.'<sup>24</sup> Maharaj once presented him a *chaddar* (shawl) which he never used but very carefully kept with him throughout his life.

He showed equal respect to Swami Saradananda, the first General Secretary of the Order. Once while Swami Saradananda

<sup>19.</sup> *Udbodhan*, 1356 B. S., p. 430.

<sup>20.</sup> *ibid*, p. 529.

<sup>21.</sup> *ibid*, p. 432.

<sup>22.</sup> *ibid*, p. 531.

<sup>23.</sup> *ibid*, p. 433.

<sup>24.</sup> *ibid*, p. 529.

was staying at the Banaras Advaita Ashrama, a few Brahmacharins approached him with a prayer for Sannyasa initiation. Several monks including Atmananda were also present there. Saradanandaji advised them to seek permission from Shukul Maharaj, and told them that if the latter permitted, he would have no objection. As soon as Atmananda heard this he stood up and addressed Swami Saradananda with folded palms, 'Maharaj, if you only touch their heads they will be liberated. Do kindly initiate them into Sannyasa according to your wish; we have no voice in this matter. If they receive your grace they will be fortunate. Their lives will be blessed through your grace. What shall we say in this matter?' With these words he fell flat at the feet of Swami Saradananda and then quickly left the place.<sup>25</sup>

Atmananda considered the words of Sri Ramakrishna's direct disciples to be infallible. Once a young man asked him, 'Swami Vivekananda said that there would be a separate Math for women. Where is it?' Shukul Maharaj firmly replied, 'Not even a single word of Śiva will prove false. Whatever has been said by him will come true in due course. Swamiji has not used a single word in vain. Not even a comma can be deleted from his sayings.'<sup>26</sup> Regarding the tremendous power of Swami Vivekananda's message, he wrote: 'His message was the message of awakening—a message to shatter the sleep of delusion. On hearing his words he who is lying down will get up; he who is sitting will like to stand up, and he who is standing will feel like running.'<sup>27</sup>

Atmananda was never tired of taking classes on the teachings of Swamiji. He himself went through the *Complete Works*

of Swami Vivekananda twenty-four times!<sup>28</sup> Moreover, it was no casual reading. He regarded the words of Swamiji as *mantras*, and would meditate on them in order to realize their inner meaning. One day someone was rapidly reading a book of Swamiji. Atmananda remarked with repugnance, 'Can anyone comprehend the meaning of Swamiji's words by reading so much at a time? As for myself, I sometimes cogitated for fifteen days to understand the meaning of a single word of Swamiji.' On another occasion he said, 'Many people take pride in saying that he has finished reading one of Swamiji's books in a day. But I used to meditate on some portions of his books for three days. Then only his real message would be revealed. What will people understand by reading the whole book at one sitting?' He further added, 'The words of the scriptures and the message of Sri Ramakrishna and Swamiji mostly deal with the deep truths of the subtle worlds beyond the reach of the senses; they are meant for meditation and realization, and are not to be taken lightly.'<sup>29</sup>

Shukul Maharaj's presence at the Belur Math created a great enthusiasm among the younger members. The senior monks of the Order, however, became alarmed at his indifferent health which showed no sign of improvement. They therefore advised Atmananda to go to Sambalpur for a change. Swami Shuddhananda made the necessary arrangements for his travel. A well-known devotee of the Math gladly came forward to look after the Swami and keep him in his own house at Sambalpur. Accordingly Atmananda left the Math after the Durgā pūjā festival in 1916. At this time his digestion was so poor that he had to go to the toilet frequently, and his diet consisted of only barley water. Fortunately, however, the

<sup>25</sup>. *Padaprānte*, p. 179-80.

<sup>26</sup>. *Udbodhan*, 1356 B. S., p. 529. The Sarada Math for women came into being in 1954.

<sup>27</sup>. 'Swamijir Sannidhāne: Swami Atmananda', *Udbodhan*, Kārtik 1370 B. S., p. 567.

<sup>28</sup>. *Udbodhan*, 1356 B. S., p. 431.

<sup>29</sup>. *Padaprānte*, p. 159.

climate and water of Sambalpur suited his health which soon recuperated under the loving care of the devotee.

The news of the improvement in Atmananda's health brought joy to one and all. He also started going for a long walk everyday to the wooded hills nearby. During these walks he would visit a Śiva temple which stood hidden in the woods, and meditate there for sometime. One evening while he was thus seated, a big tiger suddenly came in front of him. The devotee who was accompanying him was sitting on a stone at some distance. At this the devotee was frightened while Atmananda remained deeply absorbed in meditation. The tiger stared at the Swami, then lowered its head and quietly went away. The devotee now came to his senses. He ran to the Swami and requested him to leave the place immediately. Atmananda was so oblivious of his surroundings that he did not even respond for a long time.

The devotees of Sambalpur soon became charmed with the sweet and amiable personality of Atmananda. They were so impressed that they came forward with the proposal of starting a permanent

Ashrama there. However, the plan did not materialize on account of various reasons. Atmananda's exemplary life not only created a lasting impression on the minds of the devotees but also reformed several lost souls. Some persons who were leading immoral lives turned over a new leaf and became pure and honest after coming into contact with him. For all this he became an object of affectionate praise of the direct disciples of Sri Ramakrishna. Once the devotee who was Atmananda's host in Sambalpur went to Calcutta to pay obeisance to Swami Premananda who was then on his death-bed at Balaram Mandir. The great Swami lovingly enquired, 'How is Shukul Mahashay?' and added, 'Please convey my salutations to him.' When this was communicated to Atmananda at Sambalpur, he became overwhelmed with emotion. With tears in his eyes he repeatedly offered salutations to Premanandaji by touching his forehead with folded palms and exclaiming, 'Jai Prabhu, Jai Ma, Jai Gurudev.'<sup>30</sup>

*(To be concluded)*

<sup>30.</sup> *ib.d.*, p 163

## VEDANTA IN GERMANY

KURT FRIEDRICHS

If a German devotee asks himself when Vedanta in Germany began, he will come to realize, that it started with the Christian mystics. These men and women were a strange fold. They were neither theologians nor philosophers, for what they did was not speculating about the why and wherefore of this phenomenal world but recording their direct experiences of the 'Istheit' (Pure Being).

At the time when Caitanya was kindl-

ing the flame of supreme Bhakti in India, and when Sufi mysticism was rising to its peak, a group of monastic and lay men and women in Germany were seeking God through their intense love and prayer. Such was their burning desire that some of them attained a vision of Him, 'Visio Dei'. In beautiful, poetical language they described their experiences. One among them was the great woman saint of Germany Mechthild of Magdeburg (1209-1299). In

her work 'The Flowing Light of the Godhead' she speaks about her vision of paradise, where all souls meet, united with God day and night. The saints are dancing, and God asks the soul to join them, but she refuses, and says to the Lord:

I don't like to dance unless You lead me  
If you want me to dance,  
You must sing Yourself.  
Then I will jump into love,  
From love into devotion,  
From devotion into realization,  
From realization into all human hearts.

If our modern readers think that her emotions had overpowered her intellect, and her statements lack depth, they will be surprised to hear Mechthild say with aphoristic precision:

Love without knowledge,  
is for the soul real darkness  
Knowledge without realization,  
seems to her like torments of hell.

All the mystics from Hildegard of Bingen (1098-1179) to Mechthild of Magdeburg and from Meister Eckhart (1260-1329) to Jakob Boehme (1575-1624), all saw God, talked to Him and were happy in His presence. In a dualistic religion like Christianity this seems to be the purpose and goal of life, but the mystics did not stop there. They realized that there are still higher levels, and the dualism of subject and object gets obliterated in the advanced stages of mystic union with God 'Unio Mystica'.

It is interesting to note that not only their experiences, but also their terminology was similar to that of the Vedic seers and Hindu saints. The Upaniṣad says: 'He who knows Brahman, becomes Brahman.' Meister Eckhart said: 'To see God means, to see as God sees.' Vedanta declares: 'If you want the Absolute, you have to

transcend maya.' Meister Eckhart: 'If you want the kernel of a nut, you have to destroy the shell. If you want the Pure Being, you have to destroy all forms.'

This beautiful blossoming of spirituality did not, however, last long. The influence of clerical dogmatism and intellectual theology was much stronger than that of the small group of enlightened souls. The Dark Age began with endless wars in the name of religion, and Jakob Boehme, who fought a lifelong battle with the theologians, warned them in a prophetic manner: 'If you go on with your encrusted dogma and give people stones instead of bread, they will sooner or later look for other sources of advice and spiritual wisdom.'

In the middle of the 18th century, French orientalists translated from the Persian language fragments of Hindu philosophy under the title 'Oupaniḥat'. These scriptures became known also in Germany, and two poets of the romantic period, Schlegel and Tieck, made German translations. Both of them were well suited for this purpose, because they had already translated Cervantes and Shakespeare with great success. The German texts circulated among the intellectuals and in the universities. Thus Arthur Schopenhauer (1788-1860) came to know of the Upaniṣads and through them came into contact with Indian philosophy. In his main work *The World as Will and Idea* the influence of Vedanta is tangible. Schopenhauer later said about the Upaniṣads: 'They have been the consolation of my life and will be the consolation at the time of my death.'

His great admirer was Paul Deussen, another great teacher of philosophy. Paul Deussen (1845-1919) like Schopenhauer was fascinated by the large treasures lying in Indian scriptures. He studied Sanskrit, became an indologist and an important exponent of Indian philosophy in Germany



and in the West. In 1882 he published a book *Representation of the Vedanta*. 1884 the university of Kiel, where he was lecturing, published a series, *History of Philosophy in Respect to Religions*, to which Deussen contributed a volume treating the philosophy of the Vedas up to the Upaniṣads. Then he became very busy with translations, and in 1897 appeared his important book *Sixty Upāniṣads of the Veda*. In the winter of 1892/1893 he travelled throughout India giving lectures in many places in English as well as in Sanskrit on the Vedanta and the other systems. His impressions of this tour he later described in a book *Memories of India*.

In 1896 Paul Deussen learned that Swami Vivekananda had come to England, and invited him to visit Kiel. After a short stay at this university town, he accompanied the Swami back to London. We do not know much about the meeting of these two souls, but we may be sure that from Vivekananda's dynamic personality Deussen got a lot of inspiration, spiritually as well as philosophically. 1908 he published a volume *The Post-Vedic Philosophy of the Indians*, containing a detailed exposition of the six *darśanas*, especially Śaṅkara's Advaita Vedanta. 1911 Deussen founded the Schopenhauer-Society and at the same time started giving lectures on 'Elements of Metaphysics', in which he tried to produce a counterweight against the materialistic attitude of the natural sciences of his days.

From Deussen up to Professor Helmuth von Glasenapp, German indologists did a wonderful work in translation and exposition, so that most of the Hindu scriptures including the *Bhagavad-Gītā* became available to German readers. However, all these achievements were on the intellectual side and were restricted to academic circles. The bread of life contained in

Vedanta was not available to the common people. There was none to give spiritual guidance in the actual living of Vedantic truths.

Wolfram Koch was living in Wiesbaden. He was well versed in several languages and had studied mysticism. He was also a writer and was much interested in Hindu philosophy. The intellectual talks of the professors at the universities on theology and indology did not satisfy him. He wanted to see a living example of realization, a teacher who could harmonize daily life and spirituality. Accordingly, he wrote to Belur Math to send a Swami to Germany. He had read about Sri Ramakrishna and Swami Vivekananda, and was convinced that the time was ripe to spread the message of Vedanta in Germany. Belur Math agreed, and the choice fell on Swami Yatiswarananda who was then serving as the president of the Ramakrishna Math, Madras.

In October 1933 Swami Yatiswarananda arrived by ship at Genoa, where Mr. Koch was waiting for him, and they drove up by car to Wiesbaden. Mr. Koch had rented a house where the Swami could live by himself, prepare his own food and create his own atmosphere. The Swami started his work immediately, and his first classes were on M's *Gospel of Sri Ramakrishna*. Later followed classes on Swami Brahmananda's *Spiritual Teachings* and readings from the *Bhagavad-Gītā*. From the beginning of 1934 Swami Yatiswarananda gave a long series of talks on 'The Spiritual Path', and in between continued his classes for small groups on Hindu scriptures. Besides these talks, Swami Yatiswarananda gave interviews and spiritual instruction to a number of sincere spiritual aspirants.

This work went on without interruption for two years. But by 1935 the Hitler regime had established itself firmly, and

now turned against all religious sects and movements. Meetings had to be notified, and spirituality became suspect. Therefore Wolfram Koch decided to move to St. Moritz in Switzerland, where he had a house, 'Crusaida'. There a new Vedanta study-group was founded, and devotees from different parts of Europe started gathering there. But in the meantime the message had spread, and Swami Yatiswarananda had to travel a lot to see his old disciples in Germany and Vedanta students in France, Holland, Denmark and Sweden. He lectured at the Sorbonne in Paris on Vedanta, and arranged for Swami Siddheswarananda's coming to Paris in 1937, who established the 'Centre Vedantique Ramakrishna' there. From 1937 a journal *Vedanta* was published every three months in St. Moritz, in which not only the wisdom of the Vedas and Upanishads and other Hindu scriptures, but also the teachings of Christian and Sufi mystics found their place. The journal was published in English, but Mr. Koch and his friends also made a German translation, which was sent to all devotees who did not understand enough English. Swami Yatiswarananda had said from the beginning: 'I have not enough time to learn German, so you all had better learn some English.' All the lectures, readings and class talks were preserved by some devotees, and they are still a treasury of spiritual inspiration. Through the influence of the Swami, publishers in Switzerland and Germany became interested, and during 1936 and 1937—partly with the financial help of Josephine Macleod—Swami Vivekananda's four Yogas were published in German and also *The Sayings of Sri Ramakrishna* and Romain Rolland's two books *The Life of Ramakrishna* and *The Life of Vivekananda*.

The political situation in Europe became worse and, finding that the war was imminent, Swami Yatiswarananda left

Germany and Switzerland under his British passport. He stayed during the summer of 1939 in Sweden with devotees in Stockholm, and sailed from Bergen for New York just a few days before World War II broke out.

The German Vedantins, being without a Swami now, continued the work, led by the artist Otto Ritschl. Ritschl was an abstract painter, but the Nazis had forbidden him to paint, and so he had to take a job with the tax-office to survive. Meetings and classes were going on, but the group became small, some dropping away, some killed by bombs. Nevertheless, during the whole War period the work never completely stopped. When the War was over in 1945, most devotees had lost all their property. Ritschl's studio was destroyed, but his library and all the records of Swami Yatiswarananda's teachings were undamaged. So the small group in Wiesbaden started to work again under very difficult conditions. There was no heating, no food, no transport. But it was a time when spirituality had its biggest chance to get hold of the people. As soon as the mail-service started working again, Swami Yatiswarananda, who had opened a Vedanta Centre at Philadelphia in the United States got into touch with his disciples in Wiesbaden. He arranged with his American friends and devotees to send food parcels and other gifts to ease the situation of his German followers. He even sent paint and brushes to Otto Ritschl so that he could paint again.

In the summer of 1949 the news spread, that Swami Yatiswarananda on his way back to India would come to Wiesbaden to meet his old friends and disciples. They all gathered there and were happy to sit again at the feet of their guru. Hopes were growing that he might continue the work in Germany, but after travelling for a few months in Europe, meeting devotees

in Switzerland, France, Holland and Sweden, it became clear to him that his future activities should be in India. As he himself put it, 'I have to water the tree at its roots.' On his way to Sweden he had stopped twice in Hamburg to establish a Vedanta study group there. Before leaving for India he stayed for sometime with his Gurubhai, Swami Siddheswarananda at the Vedanta Centre of Gretz near Paris, and advised his German devotees to go to Gretz as often as they could. Specially the Hamburg group remained in close contact with Swami Siddheswarananda and also with Swami Ghanananda of the London Vedanta Centre. When Swami Siddheswarananda passed away in April 1957, it was a big loss for the German Vedanta students, and for several years they had to work all by themselves.

The favourable turn came in 1961, when Swami Ritajananda took charge of the Gretz Centre and started rebuilding it against many obstacles. He was invited by the German Vedanta groups, and the German devotees were again streaming to Gretz for spiritual advice and inspiration. In 1965 the Vedanta Centre of Wiesbaden was re-opened with its own rooms and a library, and Swami Ritajananda came regularly there to give lectures and interviews. As the publishers were still reluctant to take up Vedanta literature, the Centre brought out photo-copies of the German translations of the lectures of Swami Ritajananda. Swami Siddheswarananda's *Meditation according to Yoga-Vedanta*, several pamphlets of different Swamis, the *Yoga-Vāsiṣṭha*, Sister Devamata's *Days in an Indian Monastery* and the abridged

volume of the *Gospel* under the German title *Ramakrishna's Eternal Message*. In 1978 a magazine *Vedanta* was started, which followed the example of Swami Yatiswarananda's publication. There are now Vedanta study groups in different German cities, all working in the traditional line, and guided by Swami Yatiswarananda's advice: never pull down the ideal to a lower level, but struggle hard to reach that ideal, even if it cannot be obtained at the moment.

In the meantime the German publishers have realized, that there is a demand for genuine spiritual literature, and that occult humbug and psychic trash are not enough to satisfy spiritual seekers. One of the biggest of them published in 1981 the abridged *Gospel* under the German title *Ramakrishna, His Heritage*, then a revised edition of Śamkara's *Viveka-cīḍāmaṇi*, and *Ātma-Bodha* and a tract *Vedanta and the German Speaking World*. In the same year a German devotee was happy to find a publisher for his new biography on Ramakrishna, which came out as pocket edition under the German title *Ramakrishna, the Actor of the Lord*.

The work that Swami Yatiswarananda started in 1933 is growing and bearing fruit, and in these times of restlessness and anxiety there is an increasing demand for spiritual wisdom. Many people have realized that Vedanta makes them better Christians, and they are slowly learning to distinguish between the pseudo-teachers and the real teachers of mankind. Vedanta has become an important factor in Germany for all sincere lovers of Truth and spiritual aspirants.

## REVIEWS AND NOTICES

**BE PROUD YOU ARE A HINDU :** BY G. M. JAGTIANI. Published by G. M. Jagtiani, D/22, Self-Help Housing Society, St. Francis Road, Vile Parle (W), Bombay-400 056. 1982 (Third Edition). Pp. 22. Rs. 3.

This booklet is intended to arouse and awaken Hindus and create in them a legitimate pride in their culture and heritage. The value of the book would have been greater if the author had clearly listed the basic principles of Hindu spirituality and the foundation-stones of Hindu culture. For a Hindu should know what he ought to be proud

of, and what he ought not to be. But the aim of Jagtiani is to inspire more than to inform, and he does it with irresistible force. In a message to the author, Swami Ranganathanandaji states, 'I know that your intentions are pure and lofty and your actions proceed from a deep devotion to the universal personality and teachings of Swami Vivekananda.' These qualities of the author probably explain the remarkable success that this little book has achieved in a short time.

S.B.

## NEWS AND REPORTS

### RAMAKRISHNA MISSION SEVASHRAM, LUCKNOW

Report: for 1979-1981

*Religious and cultural* Daily puja and *aratika* were held in the Ashrama shrine, Ramanam and Shyamanam sankirtans were held on Ekadasi and on fullmoon and newmoon days. Discourses and lectures on Gita were held on Sundays Birthdays of Sri Ramakrishna, Holy Mother and Swami Vivekananda were celebrated with special worship, prasada distribution and feeding of the poor. Durgā pūjā was performed in the image and other religious festivals were fittingly observed.

*Educational.* The Sevashrama conducts a 16,538 books. The textbook section of the library public library and a free readingroom which received 11 dailies and 82 periodicals. It had proved helpful to the students, and the children's section continued to provide needed service to youngsters.

Scholarships and pecuniary help given to deserving students and needy people amounted to Rs. 29,772/- during the period under review.

*Medical:* The Vivekananda Polyclinic, opened in 1970, has become a prominent medical centre of its kind in the whole state of U.P. It has given a new lead in placing emphasis on domiciliary treatment in the outpatient departments, a system more suited to the Indian economy. The outpatient departments remain open for eight hours on all working days, providing facilities for radiological, pathological and other tests. Treatment by specialists is also available for outpatients and even detailed medical records are maintained. This system has reduced the pressure for indoor beds, of which there are 100 for those who really need hospitalization.

Private practice by medical and other per-

sonnel of the Polyclinic is strictly prohibited. Medicines are supplied to the patients at minimal rates, and charges for pathological, X-ray and other tests are also minimal. Free treatment is given to the needy and the poor and at subsidized rates for the people who can afford to pay Well-to-do indoor patients desiring private wards have to pay somewhat higher charges. Anti-T.B. and medicines and injections for leprosy were supplied free to the patients concerned.

The following sections were functioning in the Polyclinic during the period: Tubercular Chest Diseases; Non-Tubercular Chest Diseases; General Medicines, including Gastro-Intestinal Diseases; Paediatrics; General Surgery; Ear Nose Throat; Orthopaedics; Pathology including Biochemistry; Radiology; Physical Medicines, including Physiotherapy and Medical Gymnastic; Gynaecology; Maternity; Dentistry including Dental Prosthesis; Ophthalmology; Homeopathy; Leprosy; Social Welfare and Patient Guide; Medical Records; Blood Transfusion Unit; Ayurvedic.

The total number of outpatients treated was 20,40,187; total number of admission in the indoor department was 9,187.

*Future Plans.* The Polyclinic is greatly handicapped on account of the acute shortage of trained nursing personnel. The proposal to start a General Nursing Training Centre in the Polyclinic has been under consideration. A round-the-clock Emergency Service Unit and an Intensive Coronary care Unit are proposed to be started at an early date for treating cardiac cases.

It has been decided to shift the present monastery, shrine and library to an adjacent site and convert the vacated building into polyclinic staff quarters. Donations to the Ashrama and the hospital will be thankfully accepted.

## NOTES AND COMMENTS

### *The Rishi of Bhoodan-yajña*

The passing away of Vinoba Bhave marks the end of an epoch in the history of India that began with Gandhiji's entry into politics and culminated in the attainment of freedom by the nation through non-violent means. Gandhiji had several followers and countless admirers. Among them the only person who tried to live the Gandhian philosophy of life to perfection was Vinobaji.

What is the Gandhian philosophy of life? Gandhiji had set himself two practical goals: the termination of the British Raj and the welfare of all (Sarvodaya). Many of those who followed Gandhiji were interested only in the freedom struggle. A few of course gave at least equal importance to Sarvodaya, but understood it as a socio-economic problem which could be solved by applying what is nowadays called Gandhian economics in politics. What most people overlooked was the fact that Gandhiji's practical ideals were based on one foundational philosophy of life, namely, Self-realization through service to one's fellowmen. This is nothing but a modern version of the ancient Indian ideal of Karma Yoga. It is, however, a difficult ideal to put into practice, for it calls for extraordinary purity of character, dedication and spiritual aspiration. These were precisely the qualities that Vinobaji had been naturally endowed with. Hence he could not only recognize the spiritual vision that lay beneath Gandhiji's greatness, but could himself actualize it to a high degree of perfection in his own life.

Sarvodaya is a concept which Gandhiji defined in 1908 and developed all through his life. Vinobaji's own life and work were limited to this large Gandhian framework. Nevertheless, he did make three original contributions in the socio-political and cultural fields. The most important and well-known of these is the Bhoodan-Gramdan movement that he launched first in 1951 at Telengana and later on all over the country. He covered 36,000 miles on foot and collected 4.4 million acres of land as free gift, out of which 1.3 million acres were distributed among landless farm workers. The failure of the movement has been attributed to several reasons like reliance on Government support, impracticability of the trusteeship ideal, and the failure of his followers to measure up. But it is to be admitted that Vinobaji lacked the mighty will that Gandhiji possessed to sustain a great movement.

The second contribution of Vinobaji was in the modification of the Satyagraha ideal. According to him the goal of Satyagraha which was a negative one in the freedom struggle, namely to oust the British, should give way to a positive one after attaining freedom. In a true democracy the role of Satyagraha should be to help the Government to bring to fruition the ideal of Sarvodaya. This noble premise, however, did not work for the simple reason that Indian democracy is not built entirely on the Gandhian model.

His third contribution was his own holy life. A true Brahmacharin, a great scholar and a perfect Karma Yogi, he stood as the vindication of the ideal of the ancient *rishis* who had exercised a moderating influence in kings' courts. Contemporaries are usually unable to judge the extent to which a sage exerts his influence on the world around him. The death of the sage of Paunar has left a void in the life of modern India which may not be filled up for a long time to come.

## SRI RAMAKRISHNA'S MARBLE IMAGE INSTALLATION CELEBRATION AT THE RAMAKRISHNA MATH, OOTACAMUND (TAMIL NADU)

### An Appeal

Srimat Swami Shivanandaji Maharaj, a direct disciple of Sri Ramakrishna, also known as Mahapurush Maharaj, ceremonially opened this Math on 26 September 1926, after installing on the altar a photograph of Sri Ramakrishna and performing worship and Arati. Two years earlier, he had laid the foundation of the Math. A man of God that he was, Mahapurush Maharaj also highly praised the deep spiritual vibration of the place and its helpfulness for meditation. Thus came into existence at Ootacamund, through divine dispensation, this branch centre of the world-wide Ramakrishna Math, Belur (Belur Math).

Ootacamund is important to the Ramakrishna Movement in another respect too : Swami Vivekananda's devoted stenographer and beloved disciple, J. J. Goodwin, but for whom we might not have got many of the lectures in the West and in the East of the great Swamiji, passed away in this 'queen of hill stations' in June 1898. And a Memorial Tomb of his, bearing the poem 'Requiescat in Pace', specially composed by Swamiji, stands today at the St. Thomas Cemetery, near the Bus Station, about a kilometre from the Math.

Recently, inspired by the life and teachings of Sri Ramakrishna, an affluent merchant of Coonoor (Nilgiris) came forward spontaneously with a request that in lieu of Sri Ramakrishna's photograph a life-size marble image of his be installed in the shrine of the Math and worshipped, and that he would happily bear the cost of the image.

Now, with the approval of the Trustees of the Belur Math, to go ahead with this project, we have provisionally fixed a period in April-May 1983 for the solemn consecration of the marble image of Sri Ramakrishna, consisting of a three-day programme, details of which will be announced later. On a rough estimate, we need a large amount to the tune of Rs. 2,00,000/- (two lakhs) to cover all the items of expenditure relating to the celebration. I, therefore, fervently appeal to one and all to contribute liberally for the all-round success of the historic function, and earn the benign grace of Bhagavan Sri Ramakrishna. All contributions will be gratefully acknowledged. Cheque or Draft may be drawn in favour of RAMAKRISHNA MATH, OOTACAMUND. Donations are exempt from Income-tax under Section 80 G of Income-tax Act 1961 : Vide I. T. Case No. PAN 1101-RQ-2125/Cal/TC (C).

11.12.1982

Ootacamund

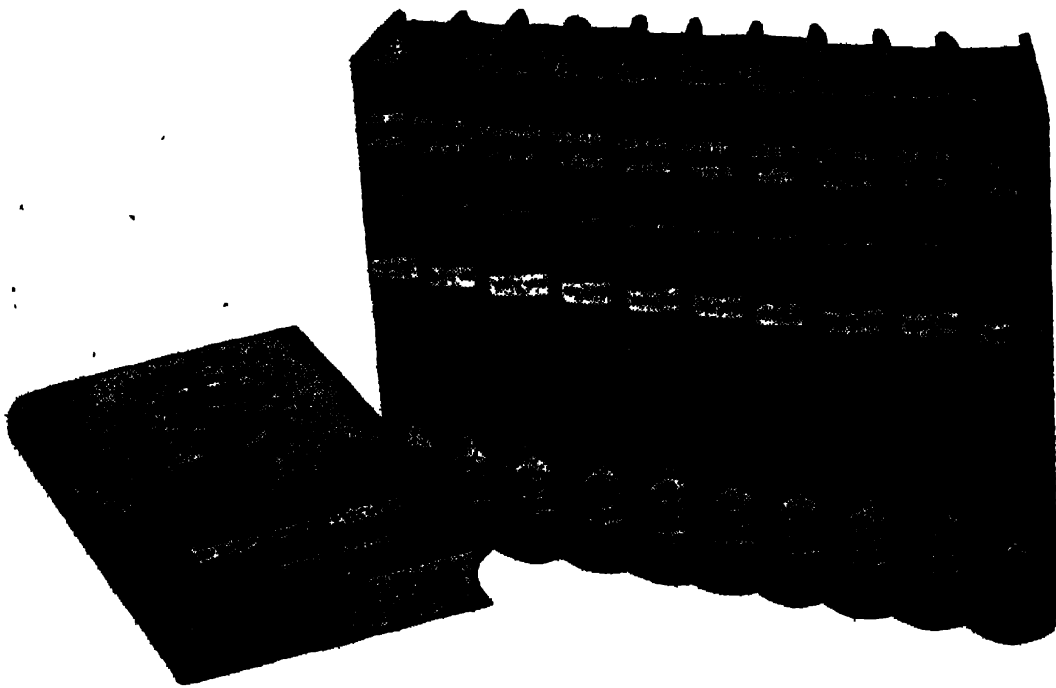
Swami Ekatmananda

President

## ● विवेकानन्द साहित्य

कुल १० खंड, डबल डिमाई साइज में, अनुक्रमिका समेत पृष्ठ संख्या प्रति खंड लगभग ४५० ; मजबूत और आकर्षक सजिल्द नव प्रकाशित द्वितीय संस्करण का मूल्य प्रति खंड १६ रु०, सम्पूर्ण सेट १५० रु० । पूरा सेट एक साथ रेल द्वारा भंगाने से रेल-खर्च नहीं लगेगा । पुस्तक विक्रेताओं को विशेष कमीशन दिया जाता है ।

इन ग्रन्थों में स्वामीजी के दर्शन, धर्म, राष्ट्र, समाज आदि विषयक ओजपूर्ण व्याख्यानों तथा 'मच्छीर लेखों का पूर्ण संकलन है जो अंग्रेजी में प्रकाशित और अप्रकाशित उनकी सभी रचनाओं, पत्रों, कविताओं, व्याख्यानों, प्रवचनों तथा कथाओं का हिन्दी अनुवाद है । अनुवादकों में पं० सूर्यकान्त त्रिपाठी 'निराला', पं० सुमित्रानन्दन पंत, डा० प्रभाकर माधवे, श्री फणीश्वरनाथ 'रेणु', डा० बर्मदेश्वर प्रसाद आदि स्वातिष्ठान्य साहित्यकारों के नाम उल्लेखनीय हैं ।



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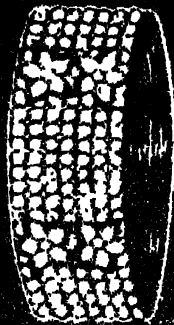
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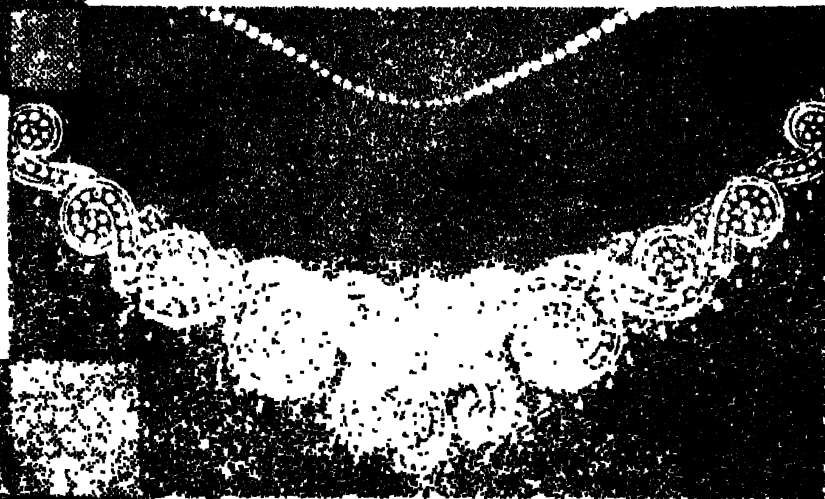
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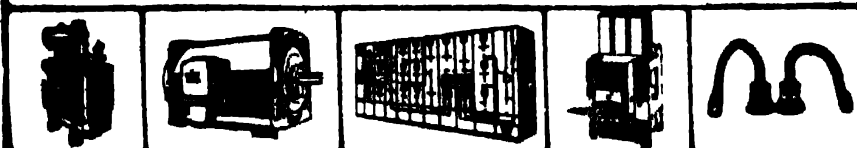
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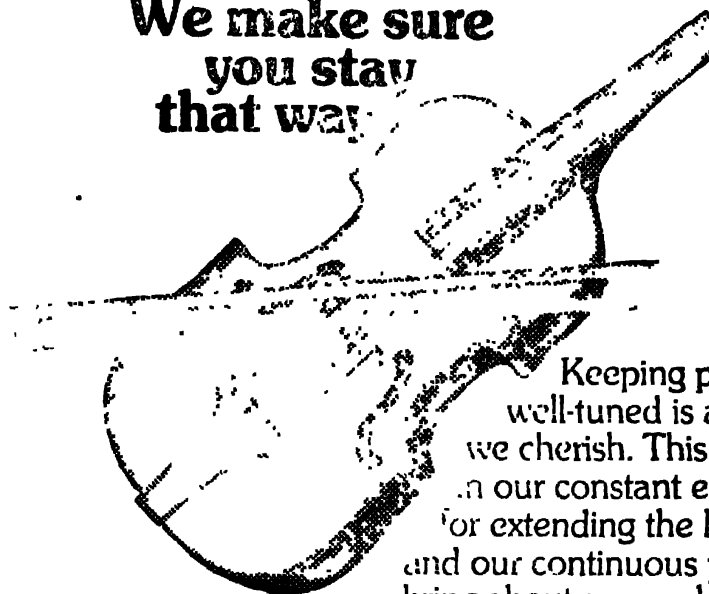
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# Prabuddha Bharata

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Arise ! Awake ! And stop not till the Goal is reached.

## INTEGRAL VISION OF VEDIC SEERS\*

*'Truth is one : sages call It by various names'*

एतावानस्य महिमातो ज्यायाश्च पूरुषः ।  
पादोज्म्य विष्वा भूतानि त्रिपादस्यामृतं दिवि

1. Such is His greatness;<sup>1</sup> but Pūruṣa<sup>2</sup> is greater than even this. All beings constitute one-fourth of Him; His three-fourths constitute the immortal heaven.<sup>3</sup>

*Rg-Veda 10 90 3.*

त्रिपादूर्ध्वं उदैन्पुरुषः पादोज्म्येहाभवन्पुनः ।  
ततो विष्वङ् व्यक्रामत् साशनानशने अभि ॥

2. Three-fourths of the Puruṣa rose upward. The other one-fourth again came into being in this world, and spread in all directions, entering all living and non-living beings.<sup>4</sup>

*Rg-Veda 10.90.4*

\* *Puruṣa-Sūkta* is continued here.

1. The meaning is, all this manifested world is only a reflection of the glory (*viśhūti*) of God.

2. The lengthened form *pūruṣa* is for metrical adjustment.

3. This stanza is a clear refutation of pantheism. God is immanent in creation but vastly transcends it. This division into three-fourths and one-fourth gave rise to the concept of *para-brahman* and *apara-brahman* in later Vedantic thought.

4. Sāyana's interpretation of the stanza is: the essential nature of Puruṣa is beyond the realm of Māyā, only a part being involved in it. *Punah* means *punah-punah*, again and again, and refers to the repeated cycle of creation and dissolution of the universe. *Viśvan* is the masculine form of the adjective *viśvac* meaning 'going or being everywhere'. The word *sāsana-anasane* (meaning 'those who eat and those who do not') is interpreted by Sāyana to mean living and non-living beings. The idea implied in this stanza became in later Vedanta schools a controversial question: how the ever-changing mundane world could rise from an immutable, transcendent spiritual Reality.

## ABOUT THIS NUMBER

This month's EDITORIAL discusses some of the important effects of meditation which enable the personality to renew itself continually.

In the second instalment of SWAMIJI'S MESSAGE TO THE WEST Robert P. Utter touches upon the main ideas that Swami Vivekananda emphasized in the West, and shows how these were all prefigured in his famous addresses at the Chicago Parliament of Religions.

Swami Muklinathananda of Belur Math concludes his inspiring character sketch of one of the foremost disciples of Swami

Vivekananda in the second instalment of SWAMI ATMANANDA.

IN AN OUTLINE OF THE PHILOSOPHY OF JIVA GOSVAMIN Prof. Ranjit Kumar Acharjee of Ramakrishna Mahavidyalaya, Kailashahar, North Tripura, provides a lucid summary of the philosophical contributions of Jiva Gosvāmin to Bengal Vaiṣṇavism.

Many of our readers will be delighted to find in the brief article HOW TO STUDY SWAMI VIVEKANANDA a new and helpful way to understand the vast and varied teachings of Swamiji. Its author Brahmachari Shuddha Chaitanya is an American novice at the Ramakrishna Mission Institute of Culture, Calcutta.

## MEDITATION AND SELF-RENEWAL

(EDITORIAL)

### *Spiritual growth and self-renewal*

Spiritual growth is the result of continual self-renewal. Growth implies the development or creation of something surplus. The body gets its energy for work and maintenance from catabolism, a destructive physiological process of breaking down and oxidation of organic molecules and tissues. This loss is made up through anabolism, a constructive physiological process of synthesis of complex organic molecules and tissues. These two processes together constitute metabolism which is one of the three fundamental characteristics of living organisms (the other two being evolution and consciousness). If anabolism merely balances catabolism, the body will only be just able to maintain itself, but there will be no growth. For growth a surplus of energy and tissues is necessary, and this becomes pos-

sible only when the constructive process exceeds the destructive one.

This is true of spiritual life also. Spiritual struggle involves a considerable amount of destruction—destruction of past habits, memories, attitudes, feelings, lower pleasures, and so on—and the expenditure of mental energy in the effort to control impulses, senses and mind. If this is not counter-balanced by a positive and constructive process, spiritual life will appear futile and as another form of needless suffering. But a balancing and replenishing process of spiritual anabolism exists, and it is called Yoga. However, for the attainment of spiritual growth or progress this constructive process must exceed the destructive effects of spiritual struggle, otherwise it will only enable us to lead a fairly well-adjusted and peaceful life. In other words, yoga becomes an effective means of spiritual

growth only when it is practised with a certain degree of intensity and is raised to higher and higher levels.

Spiritual growth is not a three-dimensional increase in bulk. It is an evolution of the Self, an extension of consciousness from a lower level to a higher level. Yoga is a comprehensive system of disciplines which operate at different levels of personality, but its main thrust is the transformation or unfolding of consciousness. Spiritual growth needs not only the recuperation of the different powers and energies of the different parts of the personality but also the transformation and extension of consciousness. Of all the disciplines of Yoga it is meditation that directly and most effectively brings about this renewal and inner transformation. How meditation does this is the subject of our discussion here.

Before proceeding further, three points are to be noted in the practice of meditation. One is that meditation is something more than thinking about an object or stilling thought waves or relaxing the mind. When a person meditates, many changes take place in his consciousness. These changes are at first so subtle that the gross mind is often unable to detect them. Hence many people complain that meditation does not produce any tangible result in them. However, as their minds get purified and sharpened by the practice of meditation, they gain the capacity to detect these interior changes and understand their significance.

The path of spiritual life is full of obstacles and it is not possible to know or practise true meditation unless some of these major obstacles are overcome through some other preliminary disciplines like selfless work, prayer etc. But once a person gets established in meditation, he will find that meditation itself is capable of overcoming the obstacles. Regarding this there is an ancient saying : 'If through carelessness a yogi does something wrong, its evil effect

can be burnt up through Yoga itself and not otherwise.'<sup>1</sup>

The third point to be noted is that meditation is not a sudden flight into the super-conscious. It passes through different stages, as Patañjali clearly states in one of his Yoga aphorisms.<sup>2</sup> But then, how to know which stage comes after which, and how to know where exactly one is? The commentator Vyāsa says that (the yoga of) meditation itself will teach us this; and he quotes an ancient authority : 'Yoga is to be known through yoga; yoga is attained through yoga.'<sup>3</sup> The knowledge needed for the transformation of consciousness, the laws governing the ascent of the Self, the process of self-renewal—all these are lying hidden in the depths of the human mind. Meditation will reveal them if it is practised systematically for several years.

#### *Counteracting the effects of the past*

Our present habits, attitudes and the way we react to people and circumstances are all determined by our past experiences. Now and then everyone finds himself overpowered by moods of depression and dissatisfaction, when life appears empty and meaningless. After making pious resolutions people fail to carry them out, and thus develop feelings of guilt and sin. Many people who cherish an ambition for wealth, power or fame find their plans frustrated at every turn. Spiritual aspirants find that on some days their minds are bright and full of aspiration, but on other days they feel dull and

1. यदि कुर्यात् प्रमादेन योगी कर्म विगर्हितम् ।  
योगेनैव दहेदहो नान्यत् तत्र कदाचन ॥

*Mahābhārata* 11.21.25.

2. तस्य भूमिषु विनियोगः ।

*Yoga-Sūtra* 3.6.

3. योगेन योगो ज्ञानव्यो योगो योगात् प्रवर्तते ।

Quoted by Vyāsa on *ibid.*



are unable to meditate or repeat the divine name with concentration. All these happen in spite of their best efforts and intentions, apparently without any cause. Nothing, however, happens without a cause. The causes of our failures, sufferings and fluctuating moods originated in our past and lie buried deep down in us beyond the reach of the conscious mind. Two of the significant contributions of Freud to world thought are the discovery of the unconscious and the discovery of the deep-seated influence of childhood experiences on adult life. Another discovery of his is that in the dark chambers of the unconscious operate two types of forces: a force of expression and a force of repression, though he did not fully understand their nature. It is surprising to note that all these principles form a part of the foundation of yoga psychology and were discovered by the ancient sages of India more than two thousand years ago.

An important question rises here: can the effects of the past be overcome now? An effect can be overcome only by destroying its cause. The destruction of the past psychological causes of present suffering involves three conditions: (1) discovery of the actual causes of our present difficulties by tracing their roots into the depths of the unconscious; (2) handling the mental forces of expression and suppression operating there; and (3) the destruction of the causal root. This was what Freud and his followers attempted to do, and the three conditions mentioned above form the basic steps in their psycho-analytic technique. But they attained only partial success in their attempts.

Yoga offers a comprehensive scheme for the complete eradication of the past causes of present suffering and for the total renewal of the whole human personality. This scheme is based on three fundamental principles of yoga psychology. The first principle is that every action and experience

leaves a subtle effect in the mind in the form of a residue or seed known as *samskāra*. This seed is capable of reproducing the original action or experience later on by sprouting into a *vṛtti* or thought-wave. Thus it is the *samskāras* that are the real cause of all our present sufferings, and in order to get rid of sufferings we have to get rid of the *samskāras*.

The second principle of yoga psychology is that there are two forces operating in the mind: a force of expression called *vyutthāna*, and force of suppression or control called *nirodha*. These are mutually contradictory. The *vyutthāna* force converts a *samskāra* into a *vṛtti*. It is owing to the operation of this force that hundreds of ideas and desires arise in our minds and make meditation difficult.

The *nirodha* force is of two kinds. One type stops the *vṛtti* and converts it back into the *samskāra* form; this is called *vṛtti-nirodha*. It does not control the *samskāras*. It operates at the conscious level of the mind and controls the gross *vṛttis*. It is this force that we generally apply when distracting thoughts appear during meditation. Patañjali says, 'The gross *vṛttis* can be eliminated through meditation.'<sup>4</sup>

The second type of *nirodha* force controls the *samskāra* itself, and is hence known as *samskāra-nirodha*. There are thousands of *samskāras* lying in the mind; but only some of these find expression (the *udāra* state, as it is called), the rest of them remaining in a dormant (*prasupta*) state or in a controlled state.<sup>5</sup> *Samskāra-nirodha* or control of *samskāras* takes place in two ways. One is a natural automatic process going on in the unconscious without the knowledge of the person. It is the suppression of one *samskāra* by another *samskāra*. For example, the fear *samskāra* may suppress

4. ध्यानहेयास्तद्वृत्तयः ।

Yoga-Sūtra 2.11.

5. *ibid* 2.4.

the greed *samskāra* or sex-*samskāra* and prevent the person from exhibiting these emotions. This kind of unconscious suppression is what Freud has called 'repression'. The *samskāra* does not lose its power but only gets temporarily checked, a state which Patañjali calls *vicchinna*. Some form of repression is an unavoidable aspect of man's social life. But, as Freud has shown, repression of very powerful instincts and emotions may lead to neurosis and psychosomatic diseases. The second way of *samskāra-nirodha* is to consciously suppress the *samskāras* using will-power. Since the *samskāras* are subtle potencies existing in the unknown depths of the mind, the will cannot directly contact them. The nature of a *samskāra* can be understood only when it is changed into a *virtti* and brought to the surface of the conscious mind. Then after understanding the nature of the past experience revealed by the *virtti*, if the *virtti* is converted back into *samskāra*, the *samskāra* will remain under the control of the will.

The important point to note here is that a *samskāra* cannot be controlled by merely suppressing its *virtti*, but only by understanding the nature of the experience hidden in the *samskāra*.<sup>6</sup> *It is knowledge that controls a samskāra and not mere suppression.* This is the third principle of yoga psychology. What it really means is that in order to overcome the effects of the past, we must re-live, re-experience, the original past events with full awareness and will-power. All hidden desires, fears and antagonisms must be dug out, boldly faced,

understood and conquered.<sup>7</sup> This is what intense meditation enables you to do. It churns the whole unconscious and brings to surface all buried instincts, complexes and defects; the purified and sharpened mind then reveals their true nature, and the strengthened will enables you to conquer them. If your meditation fails to do all this, it means that it lacks either intensity or proper direction.

The knowledge gained through ordinary meditation, *dhyāna*, can only convert the *samskāras* to a state of control and reduced vigour, but cannot destroy them. It is only the knowledge which arises in the advanced stages of meditation known as *samādhi* that can completely de-activate the *samskāras*. This higher knowledge, known as *ṛtambharā-prajñā* ('truth-bearing intuition'), *prajñāloka* (light of intuition) etc. in Yoga books, acts as a kind of inner fire and light and reduces the *samskāras* to what is called the 'burnt-seed state' (*dagdha-bija avasthā*).

It is therefore good to remember that every time you meditate you apply a check on the past causes of your present difficulties, conflicts and suffering.

#### *Maturity of character*

Freedom from the past should lead to the second step in self-renewal, namely, maturity of character. For this it is necessary to have a mature ego. Man's true nature is the self-luminous Atman, but this is eclipsed

6. This is the difference between *virtti-nirodha*, mentioned earlier, and *samskāra-nirodha*. In the former, a *virtti* which rises of its own accord is merely suppressed without understanding the nature of the experience involved in it. In the latter, a *samskāra* is consciously roused into a *virtti* and, after studying its underlying experience, is reconverted into the *samskāra* consciously. In the first, control of *virtti* is an end in itself. In the second, control of *samskāra* is the goal and is effected through the control of the *virtti*.

7. This is of course the central principle of Freudian psycho-analysis which, however, owing to its crude theories and techniques, does not produce any deep or thorough transformation. In the path of the Tantras actual life-situations are created through rituals in order to dig out from the bottom of the mind past experiences and repressed instincts and to conquer them. Every spiritual aspirant will have to do a sort of mental Tāntrik sādhanā at some stage or other in his spiritual life.

by the ego. Without understanding the nature of the ego it is not possible to understand the nature of Atman. Spiritual aspirants find the ego or egoism a great obstacle to spiritual progress, and want to get rid of it. They want to practise humility. It should be first of all noted that 'ego' and 'egoism' do not mean the same.

The ego is an internal organ (*antah-karana*), just as the heart or liver is an external physical organ. It has several useful functions to perform, like the co-ordination of the different parts of the personality. For a beginner in spiritual life the main problem should be, not to destroy the ego (which is impossible, anyway) but to purify, strengthen and develop it. For without a pure, strong and mature ego it is impossible to sustain prolonged spiritual struggles and bear the shocks of life.

Egoism, on the other hand, is the way the ego behaves, especially its mode of referring to itself. Egoism becomes troublesome only when the ego behaves wrongly towards others and makes exaggerated claims regarding itself. This kind of 'wrong' or 'false' egoism is to be eliminated. 'Right egoism', that is, the correct judgement of oneself and other people, and the ability to live in harmony with all people alike, is an important mark of maturity of character. It is true humility.

The first step to the development of a mature ego is to confront the ego as it truly is. The ego puts on so many different masks that it is difficult to understand its real nature. The next step is to accept this true image of oneself with all its defects and limitations. The third step is to give up 'wrong egoism' in the form of hypocrisy, self-deception, pretending to be more than what one really is, and jealousy. The fourth step is to re-educate the ego to develop 'right egoism' in the form of the ability to make a correct appraisal of oneself, strength to face the problems of life, and freedom from fear and hatred. Truthfulness, Strength

and Freedom—these are the characteristics of a mature ego, and hence, of a mature character.

For all these steps meditation is a great help, for only in the depths of meditation can man truly confront his ego, understand it, and transform it. And through all this the whole moral life of the aspirant gets renewed.

### *Waking up from dreaming*

Though meditation is a fully conscious discipline, its effects are not restricted to the waking state alone but penetrate into the dream and deep-sleep states. Dreaming is of three kinds. What is coming to all these types is man's helplessness and inability to use will-power in that state.

The first type of dreaming is that which produces the dreams proper during sleep at night. Many of the dreams are reappearances of past experiences and repressed desires. Some are symbolic and, if understood, give valuable information about the working of the unconscious. Some dreams are unpleasant and harmful, and yet occur even though we don't want them. The reason for this is our lack of knowledge of the dream-self which has been allowed to develop like a tribal or an outlaw. However, through meditation it is possible to create pockets of awareness in the dream world which will protect us from bad dreams. It is even possible to contact the dream-self through meditation and change the whole dreaming pattern in due course.

The second type of dreaming is day-dreaming, fantasy, *manorājya*. Unlike the first, this type is not totally cut off from the waking-state. The day-dreamer is still his waking self, but not his actual ego but an imaginary ego with which he identifies himself so completely that for a time he forgets the real world and dwells in the fantasy world. Human energy instead of being utilized in practical life is wasted in futile imagination.

However, day-dreaming is an expression of the deep-seated urge of the ego to transcend its present limitations and achieve glory. Meditation acts as a check on day-dreaming and, when through long practice of meditation one realizes the luminous glory of the true Atman, this persistent habit completely vanishes.

The third type of dreaming is leading a forgetful, mechanical life identifying oneself wholly with the real objects (which distinguishes it from day-dreaming) of the world. In other words, it is a life without self-awareness. This kind of somnambulistic existence, which characterizes the lives of the majority of mankind, deprives a person of self-mastery, and converts him into a machine controlled by the blind forces of nature. Most people do not live, they are driven—driven to eat, work, talk and sleep. Meditation is a struggle for consciousness. Through it man recovers his self-awareness, becomes a master of his own life, gets out of the unconscious drift, and leads a purposeful goal-oriented life.

### *Release of energy*

There is a close connection between consciousness and psycho-physical energy. Meditation increases not only knowledge but also power. This increase in energy takes place in several ways. As the unconscious comes under greater control through meditation, a lot of energy, which had till then been wasted in repressing or suppressing lower thoughts and in day-dreaming and automatic activities, becomes available for higher life. Secondly, meditation unlocks some of the hidden chambers of the unconscious, activates the higher spiritual centres, and releases psychic and spiritual energies which the aspirant had never known before. There are special yogic techniques called *saṁyama* for this, but even ordinary simple meditation is sufficiently effective.

The third way meditation releases energy is through sublimation. When the energy of lower instincts is conserved, purified and lifted to a higher level, it changes into a form of spiritual energy known as *ojas*. This *ojas* is actually a highly refined and luminous form of *Prāṇa*. Says Swami Vivekananda: 'All forces that are working in the body in their highest form become Ojas. You must remember that it is only a question of transformation ... The Yogis say that that part of the human energy which is expressed as sex energy in sexual thought, when checked and controlled, easily becomes changed into Ojas, and as the *Mūlādhāra* guides this, the Yogi pays particular attention to that centre. He tries to take up all his sexual energy and convert it into Ojas'<sup>8</sup> The mere observance of continence known as *Brahmacharya* only conserves the vital energy. This energy becomes *ojas* only when it is purified and raised to a higher level; and meditation is the best way effecting this.

Apart from the release of energy, meditation strengthens the will by freeing it from the hold of instincts and then unifying its scattered powers through concentration. A pure strong will is a man's greatest asset.

### *Coupling of individual yoga with Divine Yoga*

Creation, maintenance and dissolution of the universe are indeed the cosmic *dhāraṇā*, *dhyāna* and *saṁādhi* of the Yoga of God, worked out on an astronomical scale. The maintenance of the whole universe is a manifestation of the Yoga of Meditation of God. The mind-boggling fecundity, variety, intricacy and the inexhaustible power of life are only the splendours (*vibhūti*) of the Divine Yoga. This being so, man's spiritual struggle, the human yoga, is only an

8. *The Complete Works of Swami Vivekananda* (Calcutta: Advaita Ashrama, 1977) vol. 1, p. 170.

infinitesimally small fraction of the mighty universal Yoga of the Divine. But owing to egoism and ignorance many spiritual aspirants forget this truth. When separated from the universal forces of Divine Yoga, egoistic attempts at meditation become a laborious task, one more source of trouble and worry. When, however, individual yoga is coupled with Divine Yoga, it becomes a spontaneous, easy, quick and powerful means of transformation of life and consciousness.

How to achieve this coupling? Through self-surrender. Surrender is of two types. One is that done through fear. It is the fear of misfortune, disease, suffering and uncertainty of the future that makes most people turn to God in prayer and surrender. The other type of surrender is based on wisdom. The enlightened spiritual aspirant, understanding the integral nature of life, willingly and consciously surrenders every part of his personality to the corresponding cosmic part of universal life—individual body to the Virāt, individual Prāṇa to the cosmic Prāṇa, individual mind to the cosmic Mind, individual spirit to the cosmic Spirit. It is this yogic surrender that Patañjali calls *īśvara-pranidhāna*, which he unhesitatingly declares to be a direct and quick means to superconscious realization.<sup>9</sup>

Yogic self-surrender is done through meditation. This topic cannot be discussed in detail here. It is enough to mention that the coupling of individual yoga with Divine Yoga through meditation needs repeated practice and that there are two ways of doing it. The aspirant should begin with the practice of intense prayer or devoted worship (either ritualistic worship or some kind of social service done as worship) in any way that is possible for him. Along with it, he should attempt to do meditation as best he can. Gradually, prayer and worship should be internalized, and he should

learn to look upon prayer as opening the heart to the inflow of divine grace (*prasāda*) and power (*śakti*), and to look upon worship as an interior *yajña* or oblation of the individual spirit into the divine Light. The third step is to merge both prayer and worship into meditation. Meditation then becomes a two-way channel of communion between the individual and the cosmic, and the aspirant's whole life becomes a part of Divine Yoga. Meditation converts the wheel of life into the 'wheel of yoga', impelled by the power of Divine Yoga.

### *Renewal of love*

Love is the positive and reciprocal flow of consciousness-energy (*cit-śakti*) from one soul to another. When fear, hatred or misunderstanding produces a break in this current, tensions build up and life loses its joy, direction and meaning. Love is the most refreshing and invigorating power known to man. A person who is full of love experiences perpetual self-renewal spontaneously.

As Swami Vivekananda has said, human love when purified and directed towards a personal God becomes Bhakti. The main problem is how to direct love towards an unknown Being and how to keep the flow unbroken. Prayer and worship solve this problem only partially. Meditation alone can do this perfectly. Meditation directs life-energies to the centre of the Atman, the very place where God dwells as the Paramātmān, the Supreme Self. Secondly, meditation being the unbroken flow of a single thought, is the only way to maintain love of God unbroken. When through long practice a person succeeds in maintaining constant meditative awareness as an undercurrent in his soul, he experiences the perennial self-renewing power of divine love.

### *Awakening of the Self*

The true and irreversible renewal of personality is the result of the awakening of

9. Cf. Patañjali's *Yoga-Sūtra* 1.23, 2.45.

the Self, which is the direct and most important function of meditation. Spiritual awakening has been described in different ways in the scriptures. But it invariably means a two-fold experience: the realization of the self-luminous Atman as the true

centre of one's consciousness, and the contact with a vaster state of existence. With this experience, the aspirant feels that his human life is coming to an end and a new Divine Life has begun.

## SWAMI VIVEKANANDA'S MESSAGE TO THE WEST

ROBERT P. UTTER

*(Continued from the previous issue)*

### *The Message*

Though the Orient is symbolized by the transcendental peace of the Buddha, and though Swamiji was every inch the Buddha in his physical appearance, his serene face, his long and deep meditations, his keen mind, his insight into human nature, his boundless compassion, and his attainment of the highest nirvana or samadhi, he came to the West also as a warrior monk, ready to do battle for the greatness of the Vedanta philosophy against the scepticism and narrow-mindedness of the West. Like another great predecessor of his, Sri Krishna, he did battle against the demons of ignorance and prejudice, and slew them right and left wherever he met them. Swamiji came to conquer, and conquer the West he did, winning it for the establishment of the cultivation of Vedantic ideas from London to San Francisco.

Swamiji's first salvo of shots in this conquest of the West was fired in the very first small handful of speeches he made before the Parliament of Religions at the World's Fair in Chicago in 1893. Few and short as these speeches were, they yet laid down the essence of his whole message to the West. All the rest of his lectures and talks and books simply expanded upon and

added details to the basic framework he laid down at the Parliament of Religions.

On the 11th of September, 1893, he made his first speech at the Parliament. Though this was not his first talk in the United States, it was, as Marie Louise Burke makes clear in *New Discoveries*, his first truly public lecture to a large, unselected audience.<sup>9</sup> That first day, as he sat on the platform before the huge crowd among the many other distinguished delegates representing all the major religions of the world, he felt very alone, and very nervous. This was a new experience for him. He kept postponing his address, but finally he could do so no longer. So he rose, and looked over the whole, huge sea of faces outspread before him, and in that moment something happened, as if a vast floodgate suddenly opened, and he was inundated by the ocean of the Divine Self manifested in the crowd of people, and he spontaneously addressed them with the words: 'Sisters and Brothers of America!' And in that instant the electric contact was made, and it was as if a bolt of lightning had shot between them, for the whole crowd rose as one man and cheered him for several minutes. He had

9. Marie Louise Burke, *New Discoveries*, 2nd Ed., (Calcutta: Advaita Ashrama, 1966) pp. 15-48.

hardly said anything, yet he had already conquered their hearts.

Then the crowd hushed, and the words came, like rain falling drop by drop, faster and faster, on the parched earth

It was a brief talk, but it opened hearts deep-buried under long ice-ages of griefs and fears and prejudices. He gave two quotations from Hindu scriptures which revealed what few if any in the audience then knew, that religion is not for the purpose of destroying other men's beliefs, but for the purpose of finding the infinite divine unity underlying all apparent religious differences. He went on to say, 'Sectarianism, bigotry, and ... fanaticism ... have long possessed this beautiful earth. They have filled the earth with violence, drenched it ... with ... blood, destroyed civilizations. ... But their time has come; and I fervently hope that the bell that tolled this morning in honour of this convention may be the death-knell of all fanaticism, of all persecutions ..., and of all uncharitable feelings between persons wending their way to the same goal'<sup>10</sup> He thus sounded the main theme of his message: the unity of religions. This was the theme of his second talk, too, a little parable about a frog in a well who met a frog from the sea and who couldn't believe the sea was bigger than his well, an apt symbol for religious and cultural bigotry. The third lecture, however, was much longer, and laid down a magnificent, systematic groundwork for his whole message, and it is here that we get to the essentials.

This lecture was given on the 19th of September, and it began by reminding the audience of what he had already said, that Hinduism is a vigorous and all-inclusive religion that has absorbed and assimilated all the separate sects that have existed in India from time immemorial. This must

certainly have been a new idea for his listeners, most of whom probably looked upon India as a land of competing sects and many jealous gods which were worshipped in the form of what the West called 'idols'. To dispel these ideas, Swamiji said, 'From the high spiritual flights of the Vedanta philosophy, of which the latest discoveries of science seem like echoes, to the low ideas of idolatry with its multifarious mythology, the agnosticism of the Buddhists, and the atheism of the Jains, each and all have a place in the Hindu's religion.'<sup>11</sup> He have used the Western term 'idolatry', though later he was to condemn its use and deny there is any such thing as idolatry anywhere, but here he used it probably because he knew his listeners would understand no other word, and at this point he could not go into details. But the main idea he introduced here was that there need be no conflict among apparently conflicting religious beliefs. He also introduced the idea that there is no conflict between Hinduism and science, because he knew that the conflict in the West between religion and science was one of the main issues of the day, a conflict which must be resolved, but could not be except on the basis of an all-inclusiveness such as that exhibited by Hinduism.

He then said that Hinduism is based on the revelations of the Vedas, an idea that sounds like the Christian belief in the Bible as divine revelation, but he went on to say that the Vedas are not a book but are immutable spiritual laws like the laws discovered by Western science. Here he is illustrating the meaning of divine laws revealed to the mystics by the Western belief in the universal and timeless laws discovered by science. Note that he is not repudiating or belittling science, but rather is using it to show that science and religion are harmonious in that both are engaged in

10. *The Complete Works of Swami Vivekananda* (Calcutta: Advaita Ashrama, 1965) vol. 1, p. 4

11. *ibid.* p. 6.

the discovery of immutable laws that exist beyond time and space. This was an appeal to the scientific West to accept Oriental religion on the same basis as it accepted science: experimental proof. Thus in one deft stroke he destroyed the Western idea that science and religion are necessarily at war with one another. And by introducing the idea that the Vedas are not a book but are the revelations of eternal truths, he made a distinction hitherto unknown in the West between mere book-worship, which is bigotry, and the acceptance of a higher mystical revelation of truth which is completely beyond all words and books and is open to all who truly seek it. When words are spun on the wheel of the Eternal, they blaze on the skies of the mortal mind as more than words. They shine with a beauty which is truth. Thus was the Western belief in the Bible as revelation at once accepted and enlarged to infinity and taken out of all sectarian bigotry, for such an interpretation opens the doors to the acceptance of all religions as equally revelations of eternal divine truths.

He then said that the discoverers of these laws in ancient times were the Rsis, the seers, the mystics, and that some of the greatest of these were women. Thus did he at once strike a blow for the equality of women in spiritual life and show that revelation means the mystical experience. He went on to say that in Hinduism creation is considered to have no beginning and no end, but is an eternal process. This statement was a decided blow against the Western belief that the world was created once and once only at a particular time in history, a problem wrestled with by Christian theologians since at least the time of Augustine. Swamiji opened up this insoluble paradox of how God who is eternal could have created the world at a particular time, by saying that according to Hinduism creation is cyclic and never begins or ends, but, from the point of view of time, con-

tinues like a revolving wheel forever, with its *kalpas* or aeons forever succeeding one another. Time is thus shown as one with eternity, as eternity perceived in bits, as it were, not something separate from it. In all this Swamiji is not really refuting Western beliefs but enlarging them to infinity.

He then said that the human being is not the body but the spirit, a statement that agrees with the Christian teaching, a teaching which was all but forgotten under the avalanche of materialism that was burying the West. He went on to say that the soul is immortal, which means, according to Hinduism, that the soul is not only deathless but birthless as well. This destroys the barriers erected by Western orthodoxy against the prenatal eternality of the soul, thus giving the soul an all-dimensional immortality instead of a one-way immortality as does the traditional Western view which says that the soul is created by God at the conception of the body.

Then he solved another problem, the problem of why God seems to create some people happy and others miserable. Swamiji said that we cannot say that God does anything so arbitrary, that the inequalities in happiness and misery are due to our past actions in former lives, and that the soul, being immortal backwards in time as well as forwards, has been incarnated in various bodies for many lives in the past, and that its past actions, performed under the veil of ignorance of its infinite and perfect nature, are what produce in the present life the effects of happiness and misery. The soul alone produces its own sufferings and joys; it alone creates its own fate. So was the West introduced to the idea of karma and reincarnation, so important in Eastern religions, so long discredited and forgotten in the West. Heredity, the Western scientific explanation of many individual differences, Swamiji said, could only be applied to bodily differences, not to differences of character and personality, mental



differences. We create our own minds, he said, since they are formed by what we have done in the past. He disposed of the question of why we can't remember our past lives by calling attention to the fact that we also forget much of our present life too. Our conscious mind forgets, but there is a deeper mind where all our memories are stored, and these memories can be evoked by the right means. There are some people, he said, who do remember their past lives, or some fragments of them. Thus in a few deft words he placed before the West the whole theory of reincarnation as a major psychological, philosophical, moral, and religious theory and experience.

Then he went on to say that the soul is infinite, perfect, and all-knowing, and compared it to a circle whose circumference is nowhere but whose centre is the body, reincarnation being simply the moving from one centre to another. Why does such a perfect soul ever think it is imperfect? he asks. He replies that we do not know, that Hinduism makes no attempt to answer this question. The idea that some questions are unanswerable was then and still is, to many Westerners, too appalling to admit, because Western man has, from Greek times to the present, arrogantly assumed that reason could know everything (Zeno having long since been conveniently forgotten). Thus did he deal a blow to the rationalistic bias of the West, though not to the spiritual use of reason, as we shall see.

Yet he repeats the question, rephrasing it slightly, for it is an insistent one: How can the perfect soul be deluded? How can we be anything but soul, and how can soul be anything but perfect? An entirely new approach to the whole problem of selfhood is thus opened up. For centuries the West had writhed under the accusations of sin by which religion flagellated the people. Now Swamiji was saying that the soul is perfect. This was an idea the West had not heard since the days of Plato and Plotinus; it

had long since lain buried under the rubble of collapsed civilizations, and now Swamiji brought it forth as vital and fresh as a new-born babe, a spring-born lamb, from the East, where it had never died. The mystery of human life is deeper than the West had dreamed, and Swamiji put it before us. We go up and down, he says, 'a powerless, helpless wreck on an ever-raging current of cause and effect . . . . Is there no hope? Is there no escape?' Here Swamiji's dispassionate reasoning gives place to impassioned poetry and high drama. In presenting this picture he first gives the materialistic view of man as but a cork on the waves of an impersonal, nonconscious matter. He seems almost to be agreeing with it; the law of karma seems to be a cause and effect vortex from which there is no escape. All this is but prelude to one of his highest flights of poetry and truth. He says: '(This cry) reached the throne of mercy, and words of hope and consolation came down and inspired a Vedic sage, and he stood up before the world and in trumpet voice proclaimed the glad tidings: "Hear ye, children of immortal bliss! even ye that reside in the higher spheres! I have found the Ancient One who is beyond all darkness, all delusion: knowing Him alone you shall be saved from death over again."' Swamiji continues, "'Children of immortal bliss"—what a sweet, what a hopeful name! Allow me to call you, brethren, by that sweet name—heirs of immortal bliss, holy and perfect beings. Ye divinities on earth—sinners! It is a sin to call man so.'<sup>12</sup>

This outwelling of ecstatic love for all mankind as manifestations of perfect divine being struck at the outward form of Western religion which was primarily concerned with sin and its punishment and had little to say about bliss, and it exploded a large portion of the stern fortress wall of the Western obsession with sin and witch-hunting that had

12. *ibid*, pp 10-11.

turned much religion in the West into a grim and sadistic affair. For the first time in centuries the West was told by someone who saw it with his own spiritual eyes that the soul is perfect and divine.

One might think that the lecture would end on this high note, but Swamiji had much more to say, all of it extremely relevant. He said that the Vedas did not teach a wrathful and unforgiving God but rather a God of all-pervading power and love, the formless One, yet at the same time the Father, Mother, Friend, and the Beloved Who is dearer than all, Who is to be loved without bargaining or self-seeking. He said the Vedas teach the essential divinity of the soul though it is held in bondage by matter, but this bondage can be broken through the mercy of God, and this mercy comes only as a result of the soul's having purified itself. Purity of heart, he says, evokes the mercy of God and leads to God-realization. He says that the Hindu wants God right now in this life, not in some vague future time after the death of the body. For the Hindu, he says, religion is not a matter of formalized creeds but is the actual experiencing of God here and now by the pure soul. When a man realizes God, he says, he lives a life of infinite bliss and perfection. Perfection for the Hindu means oneness with God. Swamiji thus combined the paths of Jñāna and Bhakti with exquisite finesse and brevity in this first major lecture to the West. And he added the point he later repeated many times in different ways, that oneness with God through knowledge and love is not a loss of individuality but is rather the shedding of the false individuality and the gaining of the only true individuality there is, the Infinite Self.

He made two more important points before he closed. The first was about science. He used the West's intensive involvement in the development of science to show how the Infinite alone is the true individuality and the true reality. He said that science

reveals that matter is one unbroken ocean, and that the so-called individual body is a delusion. What I call 'my' body is simply a wave or a bubble in that ocean; through it flows the whole material universe. It has no real boundaries. So the soul has no real boundaries either. Then he made the point he later expanded upon many times. Science, he said, is the search for unity by sorting out particulars into classes, and smaller classes into larger classes. So science consists in the search for and the finding of unity. But why stop before ultimate unity is reached? he asks. Religion is the search for ultimate unity or God, so religion is simply the science of sciences. Thus at one stroke Swamiji destroyed the separating ramparts reared in the West between science and religion. He did not say to stop being scientific. Instead, he said to carry science to its logical conclusion and reach the final unity of all, the Absolute One, which is the goal of all sciences and all religions. Thus, not only are all religions one, but science and religion as well are one, according to Swamiji, in the sense that all sciences and all religions are seeking the same goal, and in the sense that that goal can be found, Absolute Unity. Since Swamiji spoke these words in 1893, modern scientists in their search for unity have produced results that bear out the mystical view of the final unity of all beings. Einstein's Relativity Theory and his Unified Field Theory<sup>13</sup> broke down many barriers of beliefs that had previously appeared to separate various phenomena that are not really separate. Fritjof Capra, professor of physics at the University of California at Berkeley, has shown the harmony he believes exists between Eastern religions and modern physics in his book *The Tao of Physics*. In an article of the same title published in the *Prabuddha Bharata* magazine of March, 1979, Dr.

13. See Lincoln Barnett, *The Universe and Dr. Einstein* (New York: Mentor, 1950)

Capra summarizes his views. Thus we can see that science, using scientific methods, is getting closer and closer to the universal unity behind phenomena as it was urged to do by Swamiji in 1893.

The second important point he made was about idolatry. He discussed not the word but the idea. He showed why image worship is necessary as a preliminary step on the spiritual path. He said that God cannot be expressed in images, words, or ideas; being formless He is beyond all relative things. But that doesn't mean that all images, words, or ideas are wrong. 'Would it be right,' he asked 'for an old man to say that childhood is a sin?'<sup>14</sup> Thus did he show that it is no sin to worship God through images. It is a stage on the path, that is all, a stage that must be used and transcended. He said that Hinduism recognizes nature's plan of unity in variety; that is, Hinduism is universal and accepts all forms of religion if practised with sincerity. He quoted Kṛṣṇa as saying, 'I am in every religion as the thread through the string of pearls,' and pointed out that Hinduism admits Buddhism and Jainism that do not believe in God. What a tumbling of walls was there! To the cradle Western mind atheism could not have been considered a religion at all, yet here is Swamiji saying that Hinduism includes even atheism in its pantheon of religions.

Now this is the essence of his message to the West, this his first major lecture in the West, at the Parliament of Religions. Whatever he said after that was an expansion of these points. The only subjects he did not introduce in this lecture were the paths of Karma Yoga and Rāja Yoga. These two paths he lectured on extensively later and wrote out painstakingly in book form, showing that he considered them just as important as the other two paths of Jñāna Yoga and Bhakti Yoga. He thus intro-

duced Advaita Vedānta, the immortality of the soul and the oneness of the soul with God, the essential infinitude, eternality, and perfection of the soul, the law of Karma and reincarnation as applied to the apparent self, and the truth that religion and science are not really opposed to one another but are actually seeking the same goal, absolute unity. He also wanted the West to know that sin should not be the chief preoccupation of religion, but he cautioned here that Hinduism is not indifferent to immorality since it teaches that the mercy of God in granting illumination to the soul depends upon the purity of heart in the apparent self. And, instead of urging the West to give up reason, science, and philosophy, he urged it to develop these studies much more thoroughly than it had yet done and to apply scientific methods to religion to find ultimate unity. Above all, he urged the West not to be content with mere verbal theories about God but to translate theories into practice and actually realize God in experience here and now.

In developing later his teachings on Karma Yoga and Rāja Yoga, he brought out the fact that he was urging the active, practical, scientific West to be active, practical, and scientific about religion and treat religion like a science in order to produce practical results in experience by following the rules of practice laid down by the experts, the *gurus*. The path of Rāja Yoga is a series of techniques which if followed correctly will produce certain specific results in spiritual experience inevitably, just like any experiment in science. He was not suggesting irresponsible tampering with higher experiences, any more than scientists teach irresponsibility in the handling of chemicals, but rather he taught an exact, scientific approach which uses specific means to produce specific results.

Thus God can be reached by experience, says Swamiji. Consciousness can be altered, raised, and redirected away from the senses

14. *The Complete Works*, vol. 1, p. 17.

and the mind toward God, not by drugs but by the four yogas. Kant was absolutely right except that he did not go far enough. The senses and the mind are but forms superimposed upon the 'thing-in-itself', and we know things through the forms of the senses and the mind, but this is not true knowledge. Kant was wrong, says Swamiji, in saying that neither the thing-in-itself nor the soul nor God can be known; they are one and the same all-embracing, infinite non-duality which is what each one of us is and which can be known through identity, not through separative, objective knowledge which is not knowledge at all. The veil of ignorance hiding reality can be pierced, not by the senses, not by reason, not by the two together, but by consciousness raised above the senses and the mind so that it cuts the veil like a sword of light and dispels all darkness. Consciousness is independent of the forms of the senses and the mind, and when it is freed from these, and from the desires for these forms, it can soar into the infinite, its proper home. The four yogas together give us the means to accomplish this.

All the rest of his teachings to the West developed the details of the four yogas into one yoga. He thus blew up the roadblock that had obstructed Kant, for, as it turned out, Kant, the forgotten Kant, was, or is, in reality, ourselves, each one of us, and all his bumbling doubts and hesitations are ours, and it is we ourselves, all of us Western Kantians, who need the courage to pierce the veil of scepticism we have interposed between ourselves and reality and to see that reality as our very own inmost Self. Swamiji gave us the power, which is, after all, courage, to realize this. He came to the West and bridged the gap of centuries, a gap that was not so much geographical as mental, and completed the world circle, and thus became the encircling World Serpent, the Serpent with its tail in its mouth, the *kundalini* power awakened and united with

itself, the ring symbol of immortality, of Eternal Life. The emblem which we see on every Advaita Ashrama publication symbolizing the unity of the four yogas was devised by Swamiji himself, and it embodies the essence of his message to the whole world. It is magic talisman for our infinite meditation.

What did Swamiji himself say about his work? Two quotations from his letters are of great interest. In one he says: 'To put the Hindu ideas into English and then make out of dry Philosophy and intricate Mythology and queer startling Psychology, a religion which shall be easy, simple, and popular and at the same time meet the requirements of the highest minds—is a task which only those can understand who have attempted it. The abstract Advaita must become living—poetic—in everyday life; out of hopelessly intricate Mythology must come some concrete moral forms; and out of bewildering Yogism must come the most scientific and practical Psychology—and all this must be put into a form a child can grasp. This is my life's work.'<sup>15</sup> In the other letter he says: 'All religion is contained in the Vedanta, that is in the three stages of the Vedanta philosophy, the Dvaita, the Viśiṣṭādvaita, and Advaita; one comes after the other. These are three stages of spiritual growth in man. Everyone is necessary.' He then goes on to show how every major world religion can be classified under one or another of these three stages of Vedanta.<sup>16</sup> The popularization of Hinduism without watering it down, and the teaching of Vedanta as the comprehensive unity of all outward form of religion, as the Mother of all particular religions—these are the important aspects of his work, not only in the West, but in the whole world, according to Swamiji himself.

15. *The Life of Swami Vivekananda* (Calcutta: Advaita Ashrama, 1960) p. 392.

16. *ibid.*, p. 345

Above all, Swamiji taught renunciation and self-sacrifice. He laid before the West a plea for the sacrificial life in words of eloquence such as had never before been spoken by anyone. Speaking from his own personal experiences as a wandering monk all over India, in the towns, villages, and jungles, he said : 'As a result of this intense, all-absorbing love comes the feeling of perfect self-surrender, the conviction that nothing that happens is against us. Then the loving soul is able to say, if pain comes, "Welcome pain." ... If a serpent comes, it will say, "Welcome serpent." The Bhakti in this state of perfect resignation, arising out of intense love for God ... ceases to distinguish between pleasure and pain in so far as they affect him. ... Why should our body be saved, say from a tiger? The tiger will thereby be pleased, and that is not altogether so very far from self-sacrifice and worship. Can you reach the realization of such an idea in which all sense of self is completely lost? It is a very dizzy height on the pinnacle of the religion of love, and few of this world have ever climbed to it.... Blessed are they whose bodies get destroyed in the service of others.'<sup>17</sup> He himself was the best example of this ideal; he laid down his body in the service of mankind as a whole, but especially in the service of the West, for he spent his best years in the West and spared no effort to bring to it the whole message of Vedanta as taught by his Master. Sri Ramakrishna.

We are here today to remember him and think about him, and especially to think about his impact upon our lives. I ask you to consider this: if he had not been born, where would we be today? What would we be today? If he had not been born, this Temple would not have been built, and this gathering would not have been held. We cannot begin to comprehend the extent of his influence upon us. He himself was

overheard to say, on the last day of his life, 'Only another Vivekananda could understand what Vivekananda has done.'<sup>18</sup> This thought explodes the mind. The finite mind cannot hold the Infinite. Swamiji was that very explosion itself. He made the commonplace world no longer commonplace. He revealed that the streets we walk on are not stone but the very living flesh of God, that the air we breathe is the very breath of the Eternal, that the sunlight is the immortal fire of divine knowledge and vision, that the trees that line the street are all divinities who salute us as we pass, that all the people who walk the streets are divinities we have the opportunity of serving.

The essence of Swamiji's message to the whole world can be summed up in one word: Advaita, non-duality. Not oneness, unity, a bringing together of diverse and separate elements into one homogeneous whole, but rather the opposite principle, the expansion of the finite into infinity. The Infinite is beyond all limited experience, as space is beyond the atmosphere, but yet it is *here* and *now* with no *there* or *then*. It is a lightning flash of vision with no limits of any kind.

That is his message, his message to the world, East and West. Whether he was immersed in the Mother, in Śiva, or in Nirguṇa Brahman, his message was always essentially the same: the total dissolution of the many into the Infinite, dualism and qualified non-dualism being way-stations on the path to the unqualified non-dual Infinite. His message to the West was simply the particular way he expressed this ascent into the non-dual so as to meet the special needs of the West. He was a Pilgrim from the Eternal who wandered for a time on the shores of our relative world, bringing us a message from that Infinite Sea, stirring us to remember our ancient divine heritage, and then returning to the Infinite once more.

17- *The Complete Works*, 1964, vol. 3, pp. 82-3.

18. *The Life*, p. 749.

He was himself his own greatest message. He taught us of the West by his own example how to live in our own mechanized society. He meditated in street-cars, in trains, in railway stations, on lecture platforms, and in doing so showed us how to be yogis in the world of daily affairs. He rekindled in the West the flame of God-knowledge. He brought the guru-power in his own person, and in the persons of all the Ramakrishna swamis who have followed, so that now here in the West we have that flame burning that has descended in unbroken succession from Vedic times down to the present. His person is like the ocean, at once powerful, illimitable, sublime, terrifying, and peaceful. The ocean has the power to send a strong ship to the

bottom in one blow. But it also is the tender, gentle, all-sustaining nurse and mother, sweet, refreshing, and ineffably beautiful. In the sigh of the smallest wave one can hear the whisper of infinitude. In Swamiji, as in Sri Ramakrishna and Holy Mother, the Fatherhood and Motherhood of God are ceaselessly and endlessly manifested, so much so that even we who never saw him in the flesh, in this life at least, can never forget him, nor ever cease to think on him day or night, for we have come under his holy spell, where we shall remain—forever.

Our gratitude to him for coming here and giving himself to us, and to all the swamis who carry his flame from the East to the West, is illimitable.

(Concluded)

### *The Lamps that Vivekananda Lighted*

## SWAMI ATMANANDA

SWAMI MUKTINATHANANDA

(Continued from the previous issue)

Shukul Maharaj started taking scriptural classes in Sambalpur also. The *Gospel of Sri Ramakrishna*, the *Complete Works of Swami Vivekananda*, the Gita and the Upanisads were regularly read and discussed. His brilliant expositions and keen insight revealed fresh meanings of the passages and created a great interest among the listeners. Usually someone would read the scriptures and he would speak a few words in between, by way of explanation. He had a wonderful capacity to communicate the maximum meaning through a minimum of words. He held the *Gospel of Sri Ramakrishna* to be the Veda of the modern age and the works

of Swamiji to be the commentaries on that Veda. He said, 'The Vedas cannot be understood without studying the commentaries. Hence the truths contained in the *Gospel* can be grasped only when it is read with the help of the commentary provided by Swamiji in his works.'<sup>31</sup> Once he asked a devout gentleman, 'How do you spend your time apart from your duties at your office and home?' The devotee humbly replied, 'I read a little from the *Gospel*.' He again interrogated, 'Have you read any of Swamiji's books?' On hearing

<sup>31</sup>. *Swamiji Padapratibha*, p. 160.

a negative answer he became quite excited and said, 'Without reading Swamiji's works, without understanding his message, what will you understand by studying the *Gospel*?' On another occasion the reading from the *Gospel* was going on. Atmananda was deeply absorbed. Even after the reading was over he remained quiet for a long time and then spoke gently :

Only those who have attained the state of a Paramahansa (an exalted stage of realization) can truly understand the words of the Master recorded in the *Gospel*. Only the *mumukshus* (seekers of liberation) can translate his words into life. After listening to the readings from the *Gospel* many people say, 'The Master has spoken this very well, ah! how dear are these words to our heart!' But where are the persons who can follow his advice in this life? You see, I am telling you the truth. To understand the words of the Master it is extremely essential to study the life and the message of Swamiji, keep the company of holy men, and perform spiritual practices. One has to understand Swamiji first if one wishes to understand the Master. All the elements needed to build the spiritual life of the modern man are given in the works of Swamiji.<sup>32</sup>

Atmananda laid special emphasis on the mode of reading the scriptures. He used to say, 'If the scriptures are read with proper rites, sitting on a separate seat and with concentration, they will leave a deeper impression on the mind. The full merit of reading the scriptures cannot be obtained unless one follows the purificatory rules like taking a bath, changing one's clothes after going to the toilet, not to read holy books sitting on the bed in an impure mood.'<sup>33</sup> He gave more importance to the attitude rather than to the style of reading. One day a highly educated gentleman was reading from a book of Swami Vivekananda. His style of reading in English was quite admirable, though he was not so much careful about the purport. When the gentle-

man left, Shukul Maharaj told a devotee, 'Mr.— has spoilt today's reading. You should come earlier to take your seat and commence the reading. Can anyone properly read these books unless one is imbued with a spirit of devotion for the Master and Swamiji? What is the use of merely getting a bunch of degrees or knowing English? The main thing is the right spirit.'<sup>34</sup>

Atmananda had a very tender heart. His love would flow to all beings without any distinction and reservation. On one summer noon he was taking rest in his room. An unknown coolie, too tired to carry his load farther in the scorching sun, entered the verandah adjoining Atmananda's room seeking temporary shelter. Atmananda immediately came out of his room and seeing the exhausted poor man exclaimed with grief, 'Ah, must a human being be made to work so much!' Then he brought a hand fan and sat beside the stranger to fan him. Much embarrassed, the porter tried to dissuade the Swami, but to no effect. Atmananda kept on fanning the man till all his sweat was dried and he felt refreshed. Such touching scenes were not uncommon in the life of this loving monk.<sup>35</sup>

Though soft-hearted by nature, Atmananda could be stern if necessary. He could not tolerate any falsehood, hypocrisy or cowardice. Whenever he encountered such weaknesses he roared like thunder. Once several influential citizens of Sambalpur including a few high-ranking officers met in their rendezvous and, owing to their ignorance, passed some derogatory and vulgar remarks against the order of *sannyasa* and the Sannyasins. A gentleman who was present there reported this to Atmananda who at once asked him back, 'Since you visit this place quite frequently, you knew the facts. Why didn't you protest against these false allegations and give them the

<sup>32</sup>. *Ibid.* p. 160-61

<sup>33</sup>. *Udbodhan*, 1356 B.S. p. 433.

<sup>34</sup>. *Padaprānte*, p. 160.

<sup>35</sup>. *Ibid.*, p. 164

right picture?' The gentleman humbly apprised, 'All of them attacked me in such a way that I could not tackle them.' 'Just now you go to them,' retorted Atmananda excitedly, 'and tell them about me. If they have courage, let them invite me and ask any question in a gentlemanly manner. If they lack the courage, I am inviting them here. Let them tell me whatever they have got to say. I am a child of Swamiji, I shall teach them by catching hold of their throats like a bulldog.' He further added, 'Cowards as they are, do they have the guts to stand before me face to face?' The gentleman repeated these bold words to the persons concerned who became startled and declined to meet Atmananda. On coming to know of this the Swami commented, 'You see, perhaps one of them is a lawyer, another a magistrate, their backbones are crushed by serving the English. They are terrors to the poor and sycophants to the mighty. . . What more can be expected from them. Alas, what an accursed fate has befallen our country!'<sup>36</sup>

A similar incident is narrated here to illustrate Atmananda's abhorrence of falsehood. Once a meeting was arranged in Sambalpur to celebrate the birth anniversary of Sri Ramakrishna. A certain speaker related some unreal incidents in the life of Swami Vivekananda in order to demonstrate his familiarity with Swamiji. A distinguished devotee was present in that meeting. Afterwards he came to Atmananda and criticized the speaker for his false statement. Atmananda scolded the devotee sternly, 'The Master has sent you here to do his work, and not to flatter this or that person. Your main duty is to propagate his message in this remote place. To remain a witness to untruth and injustice is equal to telling a lie and acting improperly. You have only shown your cowardice by

not protesting against the false utterances of Mr.—.'<sup>37</sup>

After about two and a half years' stay in Sambalpur Atmananda's health was sufficiently recuperated, and so he came back to Belur Math in 1919. The next year he was asked to take charge of the Ashrama at Dacca (now the capital of Bangla Desh). On the eve of his departure to Dacca Swami Shivananda (Mahapurush Maharaj) wrote a personal letter to Sri Thakur Charan Mukhopadhyaya, the then Secretary of the Ramakrishna Mission, Dacca. He introduced Atmananda thus: 'One of the favourite disciples of Swamiji Maharaj, a man of great renunciation, a great devotee, a great ascetic and a senior monk of the Order. Atmananda is coming to your place. By his presence that region will be blessed with boundless good fortune. Know that Maharaj (Swami Brahmananda) too holds a high opinion about Shukul Maharaj.'<sup>38</sup> Atmananda's life in Dacca proved the above statements to be true to the letter.

The special feature of Atmananda's life at the Dacca Math was his abiding interest in training the young inmates. Through scriptural classes, intimate conversations, alert observations, and above all through his own life, he tried to impress upon their young minds the stamp of spirituality permanently. He used to get up before dawn and sit quietly on his bed after finishing his ablution within a remarkably short time. He would say, 'One should not spend much time for bath and other physical needs, for it is difficult to remember God while engaged in them.'<sup>39</sup> He would go to the shrine every morning and offer his obeisance there. After that he would take a brisk walk in the Math ground. Parched rice was his favourite breakfast. After finishing his bath he would burn incense in his room, perform

36. *ibid.*, p. 165.

37. *ibid.*, p. 166.

38. *Udbodhan*, Bhādra 1356 B S p. 528.

39. *ibid.*, p. 430.



japa and chant a few prayers from the *Canḍī*. He would spend a long time quietly sitting on his cot. Then his countenance assumed such a brilliance and tranquility that none dared to approach him. In the afternoon he would sit somewhere in the open ground of the Math and explain the message of Swamiji to a group of Brahmancharins and young men. In the evening he would meditate in his room. Thus we find that in Dacca he did not participate in many activities of the Ashrama, rather he lived a quiet life of study and meditation. Once when a monk came from Dacca to Belur Math, Swami Brahmananda asked him, 'Hello, how is Shukul? What does he do?' The monk frankly replied, 'He is well, but he does not do any work.' Hearing this Brahmanandaji remarked emphatically, 'If he merely sits, it will be more than doing any work.'<sup>40</sup> Indeed, Atmananda had attuned his life to the Divine in such a way that his very presence created an elevating and tranquil atmosphere in the whole Ashrama.

Like the true Sannyasin that he was, he would keep only a minimum number of clothes and other personal effects with him. Usually he kept only one shirt, two pieces of loin cloth, two *dhotis* and one vest. With this sparse outfit and no money he travelled in his earlier days to Hrishikesh, Badrinath and many other places of pilgrimage in the Himalayas. He used to say with deep conviction, 'If a monk is solely dependent on God, he will never be in want of money.' Occasionally he used to pack up all his belongings and, tying them at the end of a stick, would check whether he could, if necessary, carry his own luggage himself.

He used to keep his things very nicely arranged. Even a broom was to be very carefully placed in its own particular corner. His motto was : 'Everything must be in its proper place.' Regarding the importance of keeping things in order he said, 'It

is a sign of control over one's mind. Those who are haphazard externally, are so internally also. A good artist can become a good monk. An artist must have concentration of mind without which spiritual practice is impossible.'<sup>41</sup>

Shukul Maharaj used to emphasize that not even a moment of one's precious life should be wasted. He would say, 'Make a routine and follow it strictly. Of course, sometime should be provided for talking after the meals or for walking in the afternoon.' He strongly disapproved gossip. Addressing the inmates of Dacca Math, he once said, 'Gossip is the greatest enemy of life. Maharaj (Swami Brahmananda) used to say, "Gossip ruins a man." Therefore beware of it. If you have no work, you might as well sleep in your room but do not indulge in gossip. If someone comes to you to gab, start reading a book. You will find that the intruder will soon go away : thereafter he won't come anymore.' Sometimes he would ask jocosely, 'Do you know how many types of exercise are there?' 'Two types : physical and mental,' would be the usual reply. 'No,' Atmananda would add, 'There is a third variety, namely vocal exercise ! Useless chatter is merely an exercise.'

On noticing the inmates of the Ashrama wasting their time in gossiping at the bathing ghat, leisurely applying oil on their bodies and so on, he reprimanded them, 'You cannot attain the goal if you waste your time like this. Your time should be spent in holy thought or selfless action. Practise meditation and japa, at least for a short time, regularly everyday. You have not seen God, have You? The Master, the Holy Mother and Swamiji—they are veritable gods. Pray to them.' On another occasion he said, 'How will you spend your days in old age when you won't have the capacity to do work? This is why it is

40. *ibid.* p. 528.

41. *ibid.* p. 527.

necessary to form right now a few good habits like meditation, japa, reading the scriptures and holy discussion. If you waste your time now by gossiping, then in old age also you will have to do the same.' Regarding spiritual studies, he used to instruct the young inmates, 'Daily read a little from books on Sri Ramakrishna and Swamiji, and from the *Rāmāyana* and the *Mahābhārata*. After a few days you will see that much has been covered. Don't read other books now, not even the books of other religious denominations, until you are established in a definite spiritual mood.'<sup>42</sup>

At the Dacca Math he made Swami Brahmeswarananda memorize the whole of Gita. Everyday the latter had to learn by heart five verses. Thus he memorized the first eleven chapters when the time came for Shukul Maharaj to leave Dacca. But before departure he advised the young monk, 'Never stop reading the Gita even for a single day. Go on memorizing five verses a day as you are doing now. Everyday go to the shrine and recite the verses before the Master.' The monk followed the advice and memorized the remaining seven chapters. Atmananda used to say, 'Every monk should learn the Gita by heart.'

He disliked the reading of newspapers by monastic inmates. If a monastic member brought the newspaper from the Math library to his room he would be annoyed. 'Unless we read the newspaper how shall we get the information about flood, famine and other calamities?', asked a young monk. 'Are you the head of the Ashrama?', was his counter-question. Then he said, 'The Superior who is in charge of your centre will gather all the information and instruct you accordingly; simply obey his orders. The goal of life is to realize God. For that purpose only the strict vows of Brahmacharya and Sannyasa are adopted. Therefore whatever stands in the way of

following these vows and whatever distracts the mind should be mercilessly abandoned.' For this same reason he would be displeased if he found the monastic inmates engaged in political discussions. He would advise them to avoid such discussions as these would disturb the mind and drag it down to worldliness. He would say, 'When one is unable to remove the undesirable impressions already existing in the head, why gather new impressions? It is not good for a monk to cherish such desires as "I shall see this," or "I shall know that," etc.'

He used to consider the work of the Ashrama equally important as the worship of the Master in the shrine. Once the inmates of the Ashrama started taking food before it was served to the patients of the Ashrama hospital. He reprimanded the inmates with a sad heart, 'How could you sit for food before feeding the Nārāyaṇas (gods)?' He used to see that even the work of teaching the students in the Mission school was conducted with due regard and attitude. He used to say, 'The quality of the first class aspirant is to be ready to serve the Master by gladly obeying the orders of the Superior without caring for his own personal taste, liking and inclination. The second class aspirant looks after his own comforts while carrying out the orders. Those who look after their comforts first belong to the lower class'<sup>43</sup> In the field of work he liked to combine discipline with individual freedom. He used to say, 'The man who is made responsible to execute a work must be given sufficient freedom. If everyone starts meddling in it, how can he work?'

Atmananda encouraged the monks to express manliness in their deportment and conduct. He disliked womanish behaviour in men. He exhorted, 'If you want to progress along the path of spirituality, eradi-

42. *ibid.*, p. 530.

43. *ibid.*, p. 432.

cate all feminine attitude from your minds.' If any young monk was found seated timidly or walking lazily, he reproved him in a tone of annoyance, 'What is this? You should walk, talk and act like a brave soldier. Unless you have recourse to *rajoguna* (activity) you will sink into *tamas* (dullness).'

He used to point out to the young monks the special responsibilities of their lives, 'Do you know what is Sannyasa?' It is to sacrifice the body for the good of the world, for the welfare of the people, by eating whose food you are maintaining your monastic life.<sup>44</sup> Regarding doing good to others he would make a practical observation, 'Even if you cannot do good to others, never do any harm. All do not have the capacity or opportunity to do good to others, but many get a chance to injure others.'<sup>45</sup>

He was very particular about the conduct of every monk. He disliked unrestrained mixing of the monastic members with lay devotees and advised the former to always keep their distance. He would caution the monastic members, 'Don't remain in the town after dusk. The mind gets attached to worldliness after witnessing the attractive glamour and beauty of the city at night. Finish your work early and return to the Ashrama before evening. The *āsan* (prayer rug) protects the monk. While walking along the street don't look right or left out of curiosity . . . . Fix your gaze on your toe while walking.'<sup>46</sup>

Many educated ladies of the city used to visit the Dacca Math in the evening. Atmananda would not converse with them at all. One of the monks of the Math then prayed to him, 'Many of these ladies help the Math financially, please speak a few words to them, otherwise they would be hurt.' Thereafter, as a duty, Shukul Maha-

raj started talking to the ladies, but only in the way of answering questions, if any.<sup>47</sup>

Atmananda had deep devotion to the Holy Mother. However, only on rare occasions he would let out his emotions. Once while practising austerities in Bhuvaneshwar, he prepared *pāyas* (milk pudding) on the Mahāṣṭamī Day of the Durgā pūjā and, holding a cup of it before the picture of the Holy Mother, wept bitterly saying, 'Mother, you have made me a Sannyasi. How else can I worship you?'<sup>48</sup> A similar incident occurred in Dacca also. After the passing away of the Holy Mother her relics were sent to Dacca Ashrama for daily worship. On the day the relics were to arrive Atmananda became restless like a child awaiting the arrival of its mother. He instructed the kitchen staff, 'Don't cook rice beforehand. Keep the water boiling and put rice only after the Mother arrives so that she may be served a hot meal.' When the relics reached the Ashrama, he was overwhelmed with emotion. That day he fasted until the worship and the food offering to the Holy Mother were completed in the late afternoon.<sup>49</sup>

Atmananda attained a high state of spirituality a glimpse of which others could obtain at rare moments. Once while explaining an aphorism of the *Brahma-Sūtra* his mind obviously rose to a very high level. Touching his head, he declared in public, 'By the grace of Swamiji something is here.' Once a monk directly asked him, 'Maharaj, have you seen God?' Atmananda laughed aloud like a child and humorously said, 'Had I seen at least a ghost, I could have claimed to have realized something.' But the next moment he became serious and added, 'You see, by the grace of Swamiji, my mind is free from desires.' On this topic he told another day, 'Visions of divine forms etc.

44. *Padaprānte*, p. 169.

45. *Udbodhan*, 1356 B.S., p. 433.

46. *ibid*, p. 431.

47. *ibid*, p. 532.

48. *Padaprānte*, p. 156.

49. *Udbodhan*, 1356 B.S., p. 529.

do not belong to very high stage of spirituality. Know that the world of realization is higher than that of the visions. Visions of forms etc. do not suit the nature of all aspirants.<sup>50</sup> He used to brush aside any question asked about visions, saying, 'I have received the grace of Swamiji, I have seen him. I do not hanker after any vision'.<sup>50a</sup> However, he confided at least one of his experiences to his dear friend Shuddhananda who described it as follows :

One day he narrated to me a dream that he had seen (perhaps some years ago). He was floating, as it were, on the surface of the ocean, lying on the lap of the Mother. He then felt an unspeakable bliss—as if torrents of bliss were gushing up everywhere—and he lost all outward consciousness. As he came back to his senses after a long time, he found himself to be a little child, dancing in the arms of the Mother. 'I had never,' he said, 'the experience of *samādhi* in life. It may be that what I felt in dream was something like that covetable state.'<sup>51</sup>

In 1921, Atmananda's health again broke down as a result of an attack of dysentery. He resigned from the Presidentship of Dacca Math and came back to Belur Math. Then he went to Bhuvaneswar and stayed at the Math there for a year, spending most of his time in contemplation and studies. He would rarely talk to anyone there.

In July 1922, at the demise of Swami Turiyananda the inmates of the Benares Ashrama felt a great void in their lives. Revered Swami Shivananda, the then President of the Order, decided to send Atmananda to Benares. Consequently Atmananda came back to Belur Math and set out for Benares in 1923. At the time of departure when Atmananda sought the blessings of Mahapurush Maharaj, the latter looked straight at him for a long time and then blessed him. Atmananda left the Math by a boat but noticed, to his surprise, that

Mahapurushji was still gazing at him from the first floor verandah of the Math building facing the Ganges. Therefore Atmananda too remained standing in the boat, offering salutations with folded palms as long as the Math was visible. This was his last visit to Belur Math and the last meeting with Mahapurush Maharaj.

Atmananda went to Udbodhan office also to take leave of Swami Saradananda who too blessed him heartily. On his way to Benares Atmananda visited Patna and stayed there for a few days. Many devotees from far and wide flocked to Patna to be blessed with his holy company.

At last Shukul Maharaj reached the Ramakrishna Mission Home of Service, Benares, where he spent the last few months of his life. His arrival aroused a great joy and enthusiasm among the inmates of the Ashrama. Atmananda started taking classes on 'Inspired Talks', 'Rāja Yoga', 'Bhakti Yoga', 'Jñāna Yoga', 'Karma Yoga' and other works of Swami Vivekananda. As was his system, someone would read the passages and he would explain wherever necessary. If there was any mistake in reading, he would immediately point it out. Everyone was amazed to note that he remembered most of the passages verbatim. In the course of the reading, he would sometimes refer to some words which were not found in the text. However, on consulting earlier editions it invariably turned out that whatever he had said was correct. Besides his brilliant memory and deep insight, his pronunciation of English was very distinct and accurate. When he recited the poems of Swamiji, the whole place would appear as if vibrating with a spiritual current. He had a special fascination of the 'The Song of the Sannyasin'. He used to advise the novices, 'If you really want to be a monk, then from today meditate on each word of this poem.'<sup>52</sup>

<sup>50</sup>. *Padaprānte*, p. 171.

<sup>50a</sup>. *ibid.* p. 171.

<sup>51</sup>. *Prabuddha Bharata*, 1923 p. 436.

<sup>52</sup>. *Padaprante*, p. 173.

Atmananda had a very high notion about the dramas of Girish Chandra Ghosh. He would read as well as take classes on those books. Some of his favourite books were : *Pūrnacandra*, *Vilvamāṅgalu*, *Kālāpāhār*, *Nasirām*, *Caitanya-Līlā*, *Nimāi-Sannyās*, *Pāṇḍav-Gourav* and *Rūpa-Saṅātana*. About Girish Ghosh he said, 'Such a great poet was never before born. Most of his dramas were written in a deep spiritual mood. When he was under such a mood, he would go on reciting and two or three writers would take them down. He did not write himself. There is a little bit of philosophy in Shakespeare's *Macbeth*. But a deep philosophical import lies hidden in every verse of Girish Babu's dramas. The more the message of the Master spreads, the more will people be able to understand and appreciate the books of Girish Ghosh. The world has not seen the like of him.'<sup>53</sup>

Shukul Maharaj kept a watchful eye on the conduct of the monastic brothers at Benares also. If he found any anomaly he would not hesitate to take appropriate steps. Once an old monk told a lie. Hearing this Atmananda called the monk and admonished him severely, 'Work can transform even a monk into a hypocrite. Such a senior monk like you did not feel shy to tell the lie! If possible, give up work and spend a few days exclusively in divine contemplation.'<sup>54</sup>

Although Atmananda enforced a strict code of discipline, he was considerate to weaker aspirants also. He would sympathetically hear their problems and guide them individually. One day a monk asked him, 'Swamiji has permitted us to take rest for two hours after the noon meal. Does "rest" here imply sleep?' Atmananda replied with a smile, 'Swamiji, for sure, did not formulate the rules for weaklings like

you. What will you do? If you can't help it, have a nap.'<sup>55</sup>

Shukul Maharaj never rejected the affectionate gifts given by any devotee or monk, notwithstanding his strict vow of non-receiving any gift. He would gladly accept the presents but would at once send them to the general store of the Ashrama for the use of all. One day a devout Brahmacharin wished to serve him his favourite dish. For this purpose he handed over a small amount of money to the monk attending on the Swami. The dish was prepared and offered to Atmananda who was highly delighted. He repeatedly praised the preparation and lovingly enquired who had arranged for it. Out of the money given for this purpose there remained a credit balance of one anna! Atmananda advised the attendant to buy a photo of Swamiji with that small amount. When the photo was brought, he became happy like a child and carefully kept it near his pillow. The incident is a small one but it enables us to have a glimpse of the Swami's loving heart.<sup>56</sup>

Atmananda gradually became very introspective towards the close of his life. Two months prior to his demise he told Swami Karunananda, 'Enough of play; come, let us again retreat to a secluded place by the side of the Ganges. I do not like the noise and company of people any more.'<sup>57</sup> He was then staying at the 'Ambika Dham' close to which was a thick bush in those days. By arranging a few bricks and stones under the fig tree he prepared a seat on which he would be found lost in meditation for long hours. When this 'secret seat' became known to others, he moved further deep towards north east corner of the hospital's Ward no. 10. Nobody dared to disturb him there as the place was infested with snakes. However, his intense contemplative mood inspired everybody to dive deep within.

53. *Udbodhan*, 1356 B.S., p. 529.

54. *Padaprānte*, p. 174.

55. *Udbodhan*, 1356 B.S., p. 528.

56. *Padaprānte*, p. 176.

57. *Udbodhan*, 1356 B.S., p. 532.

Swami Shuddhananda arrived in Benares at this time. Atmananda was very happy to be once again in the company of his dear old friend. He opened his heart to Shuddhananda, 'I am sick of useless talks and discussions. How I wish to see worship, spiritual practices, bhajan, recitation of hymns etc. going on everywhere!' Sometimes he would observe, 'Incapable as I am, I cannot do any thing myself here. I do not therefore like the idea of being in an active centre. However, I am here in obedience to the dictates of Swami Shivanandaji. I wish I could lead a solitary life in a place like Hardwar situated on the banks of the Ganges. But now I have not the strength to go about for alms or draw water. If someone would live with me and help me a little, I could cook my food.'<sup>59</sup>

Atmananda and Shuddhananda lived happily together for a few days. One day both of them walked a long distance to the outskirts of the city to pay homage to Swami Akhandananda (a direct disciple of Sri Ramakrishna) who was then staying there. Soon after that both the Swamis fell ill. Everyone took it for ordinary influenza. But Atmananda declared, 'Swamiji is calling me; now he will sacrifice his goat. My fever is not a simple one. It is a case of either typhoid or pneumonia.' Actually, his statement proved true. Shuddhananda recovered shortly, whereas Atmananda's condition deteriorated.

Even on his death bed Atmananda maintained his spirit of renunciation as bright as ever. Without anybody's help he would somehow walk to the washroom holding to the walls. His bedding consisted of an old *sataranci* (a coarse cotton carpet), a clean towel, a pillow and a thick sheet for covering the body. One day while he was away in the washroom, the attendant spread a new mattress on his bed. On his return Atmananda felt very unhappy to see the soft

bed. He reprimanded the attendant, 'Won't you let me die in peace? If that be your wish, then please leave this place. I don't want your service.' As the attendant begged pardon, he asked him, 'What is the use of this for a dying monk? Will you remove it please?' Seeing the attendant still deliberating, he could not stand any longer and lay down on the bare floor. He returned to the bed only after the mattress was removed. The next day Swami Akhandananda came to see him. At the affectionate request of this venerable monk and the entreaties of his monastic brothers Atmananda finally relented and agreed to use the mattress.<sup>59</sup> He was a Sannyasin in the truest sense of the term. Once a lady asked him, 'Maharaj, are you a Brahmin?' 'I am a Sannyasin,' was the Swami's answer. The question was repeated thrice only to be met with the same answer.<sup>60</sup> He would not keep any article other than bare necessities. Shuddhananda related an interesting event in this regard:

Soon after my arrival at Benares, one day he brought to me a trunk and after handing over its key requested me to keep it. The trunk had in it two good warm wrappers which he might have got as presents from Swami Brahmananda and the Holy Mother. 'Did not Swamiji formulate the rule,' he observed, 'that a monk should give away all that he has to the president of the Order? Please send these things to him and relieve me from the anxieties they involve in taking care of them. I shall get a cheap Balaposh (a kind of thin quilt-like wrapper) made for me and use that in the coming winter.'<sup>61</sup>

Just a few days before his passing away a Brahmacharin attending on him importunately requested him to say something about his visions. After remaining silent for sometime Atmananda at last said:

I never experienced any vision in the ordinary sense of the term. However, I saw a divine

59. *Padaprāntic*, p. 177.

60. *Udbodhar*, 1356 B.S., p. 530-31.

61. *Prabuddha Bharata*, 1923, p. 436.

dream. .. One night I lay down to sleep dwelling on the thought, 'Nothing has been attained, this life has gone in vain' I was not really asleep. Suddenly I saw a pair of luminous footprints before me. I could not recognize them at that time—later I understood that they were the footprints of the Holy Mother. As I was gazing at them, unlimited light emanated from the footmarks and engulfed me. I felt as if I was submerged in it. I know not how long I was in that state, but I was in inexpressible bliss. I felt as secure and happy as a child in the lap of its mother. It appeared to me that I was going to a very distant place—I cannot say whether the 'I' was there, everything got mixed up. The intoxication of that bliss lasted for a long time. Later I pondered for a long time, 'Was it a reality or a dream?' To this day I have not come to a definite conclusion. Perhaps it was a dream but I still get the taste of that supreme bliss, for that alone the mind still yearns.<sup>62</sup>

Atmananda's fever gradually developed into broncho-pneumonia. Despite the sincere efforts of a team of reputed doctors, his condition deteriorated. His body became extremely weak and his organ of hearing ceased to function properly. Dr. Amar Babu, the senior physician, very lovingly looked after the Swami and visited him quite frequently in spite of his numerous professional engagements. Swami Swaprakashananda and several other monastic inmates of the Ashrama nursed him with great love and care. But the disease showed no sign of abatement. At last the final day came on Friday the 12th October, 1923. Swami Akhandananda arrived and sitting near the bed, started chanting the holy names in a loud voice. Atmananda gracefully entered into Mahāsamādhi at 7.25 p.m. On the

following morning his mortal body was decorated with flowers, garlands etc. and taken to the Manikarnika Ghat to be immersed in the Ganges. Akhandanandaji accompanied the procession and proposed to arrange a *bhāndārā* (feast) on the following full moon (kojagari pūrṇima) day. Shuddhananda wrote a long letter to Swami Shivananda giving details of Atmananda's last days. After hearing everything Shivanandaji remarked, 'Shukul Maharaj was a Mahapurusha (great soul).'<sup>63</sup>

In conclusion, let us quote the editorial comments of *Prabuddha Bharata* published after his demise: 'Everyone who came in close contact with the Swami felt the silent influence of his unassuming and saintly character and loved and respected him. He combined in his life the hard rigour and discipline of an ascetic with the quiet inward disposition of a Yogi. And every minute detail of his activity was a clear demonstration and proof of that particular phase of his personality. Though naturally of a retired bent of mind, he never spared himself when the Mission authorities asked for his service for the good of others. He was, truly speaking, a genuine worker and could not tolerate the idea of doing a thing haphazardly. Sincerity of purpose, obedience to authorities and above all the spirit of renunciation—the keynote of his life—lent a special grandeur to his character. By his death the Mission has sustained a loss which it will be impossible to make good.'<sup>64</sup>

(Concluded)

62. *Padaprānte*, p. 178-79

63. *ibid*, p. 178

64. *Prabuddha Bharata*, 1923 p. 433

# AN OUTLINE OF THE PHILOSOPHY OF JĪVA GOSVĀMIN

PROF RANJIT KUMAR ACHARJEE

## *.His life*

Jīva Gosvāmin, who flourished shortly after Śrī Caitanya, was a great Vaiṣṇava apostle and one of the six Vṛndāvana Gosvāmins of the Caitanya sect of Bengal Vaiṣṇavism. He was the only son of Vallabha (alias Anupama), younger brother of Rūpa and Sanātana. The date of his birth is uncertain. Jīva was only five years old when his father died. It is generally held that he never saw Śrī Caitanya. However, according to a well-known Bengali work, Jīva had the direct blessing of Śrī Caitanya at Rāmakeli when he was only two years old.<sup>1</sup> In his boyhood he was greatly influenced by the extraordinary asceticism and deep devotion of his illustrious uncles Rūpa and Sanātana, which infused in his mind a strong desire for ascetic life. A combination of profound scholarship and sharp intelligence characterized his academic career. Within a short time, he acquired proficiency in grammar, rhetoric, *kāvya* and *smṛti*. After the completion of his studies at his native place, he left for Navadvīpa, the centre of learning in those days, where he met Nityānanda, a close associate of Śrī Caitanya. He visited different spots associated with the holy memory of Śrī Caitanya. Then he left for Benarés where he studied Vedānta under the able guidance of the renowned scholar Madhusūdana Vācaspati. Within four or five years Jīva became well versed in Vedānta in its various ramifications.

Thereafter he set out for Vṛndāvana to join his uncles Rūpa and Sanātana, who by this time had come to be recognized as the

great masters of Vaiṣṇava faith and philosophy. Under the competent guidance of Rūpa and Sanātana, Jīva devotedly studied various scriptural texts, especially Vaiṣṇava literature, and in no time became well-grounded in both Vaiṣṇava theory and practice. He also assisted, so it is said, Rūpa Gosvāmin in his composition of *Bhakti-rasāmṛta-sindhu* and other literary efforts for the cause of Caitanyaism. The Vaiṣṇava inclination latent in him from his very boyhood blossomed forth magnificently when he came into close contact with the luminous personalities of Rūpa and Sanātana. Thereafter he led the arduous life of a recluse and scholar.

It is said that Jīva Gosvāmin once defeated Śrī Vallabha Bhatta, a south Indian Vaiṣṇava scholar belonging to the Viṣṇu-svāmi sect, in exegetical disputation for which he was reprimanded by his uncles; for according to them, this did not fit in well with Vaiṣṇava modesty and discipline. It is also popularly believed that the great Mughal emperor Akbar once met Jīva Gosvāmin and was deeply impressed by his extraordinary scholarship and profound devotion to Śrī Kṛṣṇa. Akbar was so moved that he liberalized some of the prohibitions against the religious activities of the Hindus.<sup>2</sup>

When Rūpa and Sanātana passed away, the responsibility of consolidating the entire Vaiṣṇava community of Vṛndāvana and guiding seekers of God in the path of Bhakti devolved on Jīva Gosvāmin. In course of time, he became the dominant figure in the vanguard of the Vaiṣṇava movement in Vṛndāvana and Bengal. He was the moving spirit behind the propagation of *Bhakti-śāstra* of the Vṛndāvana Gos-

1. Sankar Nath Roy, *Bhāratar Sādhaka* (Bengali) (Calcutta: Prachi Publication, 1366 B.S.) vol. 5, p. 168.

2. *ibid*, pp. 180-81.



vāmins in Bengal through his able and devoted disciples, Śrīnivāsa Ācārya, Narotama and Śyāmānanda. He soon came to be considered the sole authority and highest court of appeal in all doctrinal matters. He passed away probably in the year 1596 A.D.

### *Principal works*

Jīva Gosvāmin wrote on almost all the branches of Vaiṣṇava śāstra following the footsteps of his illustrious uncles, Sanātana and Rūpa, and gave Bengal Vaiṣṇavism a sound metaphysical foundation. His early philosophical training at Benares fitted him well for the task of giving an elaborate and a systematic exposition of the religio-metaphysical tenets of Bengal Vaiṣṇavism. He was a prolific, versatile and voluminous writer who, according to the *Bhakti-ratnākara* composed more than twenty different works. Of all his works, *Ṣaṭ-Sandarbhā* which is also designated *Bhāgavata-Sandarbhā* by the author himself, contains the entire theology and philosophy of the Bengal Vaiṣṇavism in a systematic fashion. It consists of six discourses called Tattva-sandarbhā, Bhagavat-sandarbhā, Paramātmā-sandarbhā, Śrīkrṣṇa-sandarbhā, Bhakti-sandarbhā and Prīti-sandarbhā. Evidently, the *Ṣaṭ-sandarbhās* are not the products of dry intellectual exercises like discursive reasoning and logic chopping. On the contrary, in these discourses the philosophical views of Bengal Vaiṣṇavism are interwoven with the details of its devotional practices and mysticism. True to the spirit of Vaiṣṇava modesty, Jīva did not claim any originality for whatever he wrote, yet his *Ṣaṭ-Sandarbhā* 'betrays a systematic plan and execution, as well as originality in its ideas and methods'. As has been rightly observed, 'To Jīva Gosvāmin belonged the whole heritage of Vaiṣṇava philosophical thought, upon which, as a matter of fact, he freely draws, besides utilizing śruti

(chiefly Upaniṣadic) and Purāṇa texts ; and no important proposition is laid down which is not supported by some such text.'<sup>3</sup> On the basis of these texts, he raised a metaphysical system, which merits special consideration in view of its originality of exposition and profundity of penetration.

The *Bhāgavata* Purāṇa is the principal source of inspiration for the Bengal School of Vaiṣṇavism which regards it as the most authoritative scripture. Jīva Gosvāmin wrote a running commentary on it entitled *Bhagavat Sandarbha* which forms the second chapter of his principal work, *Ṣaṭ-sandarbhā*. The sole objective of this magnum opus of Jīva as indicated by the author himself, is to establish that Kṛṣṇa is the only *tattva* or Reality—the supreme Godhead and the most exclusive object of worship— and that it is only through devotion and love that this ultimate Reality can be attained. After closely examining the different sources of knowledge (*pramāṇas*) and establishing the superiority of the testimony of the *Bhāgavata* Purāṇa in the first *Sandarbhā*, Jīva devotes the next three *Sandarbhās*, namely *Bhagavat*, *Paramātmā* and *Kṛṣṇa Sandarbhas* to the exposition of the nature of the supreme Reality. The last two *Sandarbhās* are mainly concerned with *Prīti* (love) and *Bhakti* (devotion) as the means for the attainment of the supreme Godhead. To give an adequate account of the philosophy of Jīva Gosvāmin would require more than one treatise, and hence our attention has to be restricted here to some major aspects of his thought contained in the first three *Sandarbhās*, leaving aside *Śrīkrṣṇa*, *Prīti* and *Bhakti Sandarbhas* wherein the theology and devotional praxis of Bengal Vaiṣṇavism have been elaborated in meticulous detail.

In the *Tattva-Sandarbhā*, Jīva examines

3. Dr. S. K. De, *Early History of the Vaisnava Faith and Movement in Bengal* (Calcutta: Firma KLM, 1961) p. 256.

Hereafter, *Vaiṣṇava Faith and Movement*

the pitfalls and limitations of the recognized *pramāṇas* except śabda or testimony which according to him, consists of revealed words (*aprākṛta-vacana-lakṣaṇa*) and therefore is the only valid and authentic source of knowledge of the Supreme Reality. The other *pramāṇas* are either superficial or erroneous. The later Vaiṣṇava scholars including Jīva Gosvāmin accepted śabda in a wider sense so as to include, besides the Vedas and the Upaniṣads, the Itihāsas and Purāṇas, and regarded these as equally authentic and dependable sources of knowledge. Between the Itihāsa and the Purāṇa, the latter is to be preferred, and among the large number of Purāṇas representing different schools and sects, *Śrīmad-Bhāgavatam* is acclaimed to be the greatest and most authoritative of all the scriptures, for it elucidates the quintessence of the luminous thoughts of the Vedas and the Upaniṣads. 'The theory of the school, thus believes that the themes of the *Brahma-Sūtra* and the *Bhāgavatam* respectively are identical, for what appeared to Vyāsa's mind in a subtle shape and was expressed by him in the form of brief Sūtras, is alleged to have been amplified in the *Bhāgavatam* in the form of extensive Bhāṣya on these Sūtras.'<sup>4</sup>

#### *The Absolute Reality or Bhagavat*

In the *Bhāgavatam* the Absolute Reality has been described in the following way : 'The knowers of Truth say that the supreme non-dual Reality is called by different names such as Brahman, Paramātmān and Bhagavān.'<sup>5</sup>

This verse is said to sum up the Bhāgavata concept of the Absolute Reality and

has been accepted by Jīva Gosvāmin as the central theme of his first three Sandarbhas. The Absolute Reality, according to him is therefore the *advaya-jñāna-tattva*. As this is the pivot round which the Vaiṣṇava concept of the Absolute Reality as expounded by Jīva Gosvāmin revolves, it is of cardinal importance to understand the significance of the expression. According to him *advaya-jñāna-tattva* does not mean the non-dual, indeterminate, *nirguna* Brahman of the Advaita Vedānta of Śaṅkara. The *tattva* or the Absolute Reality which is the heart or essence of all things and beings is self-existent, pure consciousness (*cideku-rūpa*) and self-luminous (*sva-prakāśa*). The Absolute Reality is 'advaya' which though literally means 'without a second', really signifies 'that like it there is no second *tattva* or Reality', or there exists no other reality which is similar to it in any respect. Jīva Gosvāmin, following the Upaniṣadic teachings, regards the Supreme Reality as the most perfect embodiment of *sat* (absolute existence), *cit* (absolute consciousness, implying non-materiality), *ānanda* (absolute bliss)—*sacchid-ānanda-svarūpa*. According to Jīva Gosvāmin, an infinite number of energies or *śaktis* inhere in It and they cannot exist without the ultimate Substratum.<sup>6</sup> In his *Sarva-Samvādinī*, Jīva Gosvāmin further elucidates that the Absolute Reality is a synthetic unity and is therefore devoid of all the three kinds of difference (*bheda*) namely, Svajātiya-bheda (difference between two objects of the same species), Vijātiya-bheda (difference between two different species) and Svagata-bheda (internal or intrinsic difference within each object). According to Jīva Gosvāmin, difference (*bheda*) implies the existence of at least two independent and self-subsistent entities but the

4. *ibid*, pp. 262-63.

5. वदन्ति तत्त्वविदस्तत्त्वं यज्ज्ञानमद्वयम् ।  
ब्रह्मेति परमात्मेति भगवानिति शब्दते ॥

*Śrīmad-Bhāgavatam* 1.2.11

6. Jīva Gosvāmin, *Tattva-Sandarbhā* (Varanasi: Achyuta Granthamala Karyalaya) pp. 130-31.

Jīva (individual Self) which shares the same essence of *cit* or consciousness along with the Supreme Reality, and the material universe possessing just the opposite essence of the Supreme Reality are not self-evolved and self-dependent (*svayamsiddha*). They solely depend on the Absolute Reality for their existence and status and thus cannot be the source of difference of the first two types. The Ultimate Reality is devoid of Svagata-bheda or internal difference also. In spite of the apparent plurality in it the Absolute Reality is essentially a unity. The *advaya-jñāna-tattva* of Jīva Gosvāmin is the supreme Divine Personality, the ultimate goal of man's religious and spiritual endeavours (*parama puruṣārtha*). Thus, the Reality is both religious and philosophic Absolute.

### *Three concepts of the Absolute Reality*

Having explained the concept of the Bhagavat, Jīva Gosvāmin in his Bhagavat-Sandarbhā elucidates the three-fold aspect of Bhagavat—the highest and most perfect manifestation of the *advaya-jñāna-tattva*—as Brahman, Paramātmā and Bhagavat, understood according to the capacity of realization of the devotee. 'The three names Brahman, Bhagavān and Paramātmā are used in accordance with the emphasis that is put on the different aspects of the total composite meaning, thus, as any one of the special aspects of God appears to the mind of the devotee, he associates it with the name of Brahman, Bhagavān or Paramātmā.'<sup>7</sup> Thus it is apparent that these three aspects of the Supreme Reality are simply Its three dimensions or gradations, and not distinct entities.

Of these, Brahman is the indeterminate, unqualified (*nirviśeṣa*) state of the Absolute Reality. It signifies the state of pure con-

sciousness not characterized by particular attributes. At the moment of deep intuitive realization, the devotee realizes that his own self is in essence pure consciousness identical with the nature of Brahman. Brahman, according to Jīva Gosvāmin, is not the Ultimate Reality but simply the unqualified and undifferentiated state of the Supreme Reality, the Bhagavat, which represents the highest Being in the hierarchy of the spiritual manifestations, the most perfect person in whom all the attributes are most perfectly developed. Thus Bhagavat is the full manifestation with all divine energies (*sa-śaktika āvirbhāva*), while Brahman is an imperfect and incomplete manifestation of the Supreme Reality (*asamyag āvirbhāva*) and has been picturesquely described as the bodily lustre (*tanubhā*), the effulgent light of Consciousness-Bliss surrounding Bhagavat. Bhagavat is the *anḡin* (Principal), Brahman is the *anḡa* (subsidiary) of Bhagavat (Kṛṣṇa). This is illustrated by Kṛṣṇa's statement in the Gīta, 'I am the support of Brahman.'<sup>8</sup> This distinction, Jīva Gosvāmin explains, is not like that between two independent entities, the Absolute Reality being one and indivisible. The apparent distinction arises from the degree of realization of the two kinds of devotees following two different paths, namely, Jñāna and Bhakti. This by implication suggests the superiority of Bhakti over Jñāna as a means of attaining the complete vision of the Ultimate Reality. This is one of the distinctive features of Bengal Vaiṣṇavism.

Paramātmā, as Jīva Gosvāmin explains in his Paramātmā-Sandarbhā, is the partial appearance of the Absolute Reality conditioned by Jīva-Śakti and by Māyā-Śakti which controls all beings and their movements. Paramātmā is thus that phase of the Supreme Godhead which is the indwelling spirit and the inner ruler (*antaryāmin*)

7. Dr S N. Das Gupta, *A History of Indian Philosophy* (Cambridge University Press, 1961) vol. 4, p. 396.

8. ब्रह्मणो हि प्रतिष्ठाहं . . . ।

*Bhagavad-Gītā* 14.27.

of the conscious Jīvas and also immanent in the non-conscious Prakṛtī thus making the evolution of the universe possible. In short, it is the presiding Deity of the conscious beings and the material universe. 'Both the subtle Jīvas and the subtle material powers of the universe emanate from Paramātmān, from whom both the conscious and the unconscious parts of the universe are produced. Paramātmān, considered in Himself, may be taken as the agent of the production (*nimitta-kāraṇa*), whereas in association with His powers, He may be regarded as the material cause of the universe (*upādāna-kāraṇa*).<sup>9</sup>

#### *Bhagavat and His Śaktis or powers*

Refuting the Advaita concept of Nirguna and Nirviśeṣa Brahman, Jiva Gosvāmin in his Bhagavat-Sandarbhā discusses elaborately the nature of the divine energies or Śaktis which reside really and eternally in the Bhagavat in an intimate and inseparable relation of inherence. Śakti is not different from the Absolute Reality just as the burning property of fire is indistinguishable from fire. This suggests that the Śaktis are not adventitious but essential potencies of the Absolute Reality which are therefore natural (*svābhāvika*) to it, though unthinkable (*acintya*), being themselves inscrutable and beyond the reach of common human comprehension. The relation between the Bhagavat and his manifold powers is that of Śaktimat and Śakti, powerholder and power. Śakti, as the potency of the Śaktimat, has no independent existence apart from the substratum and constitutes an identical non-dual unity with the Supreme Reality. But the Supreme Reality remains transcendental without being affected by the world of multiplicity which is the creation of His Śakti. Thus Śakti is identical with as well

as different from Śaktimat; the relationship is one of identity and difference, or to be precise, identity-in-difference. But the co-existence of these two contradictory features in this peculiar relationship is a very unusual phenomenon which defies logical resolution and therefore is inconceivable (*acintya*). Thus, the relation is an 'inconceivable identity-in-difference' (*acintya-bhedābheda*), a term by which the whole philosophy of Caitanya's school is known.

The Śakti or Divine Energy of the Bhagavat is viewed in three aspects and is accordingly grouped into three classes, namely, *svarūpa* (or *parā*) śakti—essential and intrinsic power; *jīva* (or *taṭastha*) śakti—peripheral power; and *māyā* (or *Bahiranga*) śakti—extraneous power. Svarūpa-Śakti is the power or energy which the Absolute Reality possesses by virtue of His ultimate nature. Now, since the essence of the Absolute Reality is Being, Consciousness and Joy, His inherent energy must consist all these three in a synthetic unity, or in other words; it is that energy (*śakti*) which constitutes the intrinsic perfect selfhood of the Bhagavat. It is also called Antaranga-Śakti on account of its being inseparable from him. The Svarūpa-Śakti, which is otherwise called *cit-śakti*, is 'a centripetal force of concentration and inwardization whereby not only the whole is apprehended in its integrity as individual unity but also every element of the whole as the whole itself in an essential aspect of being. It may thus be called a capacity to intuit the many as one and the one as many, as a capacity to realize the spirit as a true spiritual unity obliterating all fixed distinctions and resolving distinctions into internal spiritual relations.'<sup>10</sup>

The Svarūpa-Śakti has three aspects

<sup>9</sup>. *A History of Indian Philosophy*, vol. 4, p. 403.

<sup>10</sup>. Dr S K. Maitra, 'Caitanya (Acintya-Bhedābheda)' in *History of Philosophy, Eastern and Western* (London: George Allen & Unwin Ltd., 1957) vol. 1, p. 363.

namely, *saṁdhinī*, *saṁvit* and *hlādinī*, corresponding respectively to His nature as *sat*, *cit* and *ānanda*. *Saṁdhinī* is the 'energy of existence of the self-existent being', and it is by virtue of this energy the Jīva and Prakṛtī are sustained. By *saṁvit-śakti* the Absolute Reality knows, becomes self-conscious and makes others possessed of knowledge. The last but most important is *hlādinī-śakti* which is Bhagavat's energy of infinite bliss by which he enjoys and makes others enjoy bliss. These three cannot be separated from one another, but their proportion may differ in the different manifestations of the Divine. The Bengal school of Vaiṣṇavism assigns *hlādinī* a place of prominence, for according to its view, *hlādinī* includes and transcends the other two. 'The prominence given to the Hlādinī Śakti explains the peculiar standpoint of Bengal Vaiṣṇavism which conceives that its deity is essentially composed of infinite bliss, which is his highest attribute and which necessarily involves the other attributes of knowledge and existence.'<sup>11</sup>

Now we come to the second power. Māyā-Śakti is that aspect of Bhagavat's power which is insentient and material (*jada*), as opposed to Cit-Śakti or Svarūpa-Śakti. It cannot operate without Svarūpa-Śakti. Paramātmān is the displayer of Māyā-Śakti through which Bhagavat reveals Him as the insentience of the inanimate world. Māyā-Śakti is extraneous to his essence and is therefore called Bahiraṅga-Śakti, which is thus 'a centrifugal force of self-dispersion and self-alienation in the Lord whereby the spiritual appears as insentient and purely material and the integral total point of view gives way to one of atomistic pluralism and particularism.'<sup>12</sup>

The third power of the Divine, the Jīva-Śakti or Taṭastha-Śakti, which is distinct from both Svarūpa-Śakti and Māyā-Śakti, is

that aspect of Śakti which the Bhagavat displays in his role of Paramātmān assuming the form of limited finite selves or spirits. In other words, it is represented by countless centres of consciousness called Jīvas—the spiritual monads, or selves. The expression 'Taṭastha-Śakti' suggests the dual nature of the finite spirit as belonging to both earth and heaven at the same time. (*Taṭastha* literally means situated on river bank, something in between the river water and the dry land and partaking the characteristics of both.)

#### *Jīva, Jagat and Bhagavat*

In the Paramātmā-Sandarbhā, the Jīva or individual spirit is described as the finest, indivisible conscious entity which is an infinitesimal part (*amśa*) of the Bhagavat, atomic in size (*anu*) and infinite in number. The Bhagavat or the Supreme Reality through His Jīva-Śakti multiplies into finite selves. The Jīva is not an aggregate of consciousness arising out of the amalgamation of the material particles as expounded by the materialists. It is a conscious principle itself with a distinct self-awareness which, however, is different from the empirical ego. Jīva is self-luminous, having the capacity of revealing others. It is an unchanging, abiding principle retaining its identity in the midst of all differences. In its essential nature, Jīva is pure (*nitya nirmala*) possessing the natural tendency of resolving into a part of the Paramātmān (*pāramātmika-śeṣa-svabhāvaḥ*). But owing to its association with the physical body, Jīva is deluded by the allurements and manoeuvres of the Māyā-Śakti. Nevertheless, owing to its ultimate affinity with the Supreme Reality, Jīva possesses the capacity of being emancipated from bondage and, on the attainment of liberation, it ceases to be overpowered by Māyā-Śakti.

According to all schools of Vaiṣṇavism including the followers of Bengal

11. *Vaiṣṇava Faith and Movement*, p. 280.

12. Dr. S. K. Maitra, *op. cit.* p. 363.

Vaiṣṇavism, the experience of the world is not unreal, and the world is a real creation, a real transformation of the Supreme Reality by way of Self-limitation into the insentience of the inanimate material world and self-multiplication into the consciousness of the finite selves. Paramātmā, by the exercise of His Māyā-Śakti, brings into being the material universe and he is also the divine agent of its sustenance and dissolution. Māyā is therefore responsible for the evolution of all cosmic categories and Prakṛtī or *pradhāna* which is their root. From what has been discussed above as regards the creation of the world of things and beings, it is evident that Bengal Vaiṣṇavism upholds both *satkārya-vāda* and *parināma-vāda* (real transformation) as against *vivarta-vāda* the doctrine of illusory transformation advocated in Śaṅkara's Advaita Vedānta.

But the most crucial question is : if Jīva is an *amśa* or part of the Supreme Reality, then how are we to explain the relation between the individual self and the Paramātmā? Again, if the universe is a real transformation of the Supreme Reality, does it not affect the unity and immutability of His Being? How does the Supreme Spiritual Reality appear as the insentience of the

material world? In reply to this, Bengal Vaiṣṇavism expounds the doctrine of 'Inexplicable identity-in-difference (*acintya-bhedābheda*)' already referred to. Jīva Gosvāmin after elaborate examination in his *Sandarbhā* and *Sarva-Saṁvādinī* holds that the relation between Jīva and Jagat on the one hand, and Bhagavat on the other hand is one of *acintya-bhedābheda*. It is transcendental and superlogical and therefore not amenable to human understanding. By qualifying the relation with the word '*acintya*', the Bengal school of Vaiṣṇavism has introduced a mystic element into the philosophical concept.

The philosophy expounded by Jīva Gosvāmin in his *Sat-Sandarbhā* contains elements which may be characterized as idealistic, theological and mystical. Thus his philosophy meets man's moral, spiritual, emotional and practical needs and aspirations. It does not regard life and its values, spiritual striving and goal as illusory. Overall, it cannot be denied that Jīva Gosvāmin has built a philosophical edifice of intricate beauty and basic unity which, being one of the latest additions to Vedānta, has incorporated into it some of the best points of other schools.

## HOW TO STUDY SWAMI VIVEKANANDA

BR SHUDDHA CHAITANYA

The word *study* evokes images of a teacher in a classroom, of homework assignments and stacks of paperwork. We may think of it too as the process of acquiring mere book-knowledge and recall Sri Rāmakrishna's injunction to eat the mangoes rather than waste time in counting the trees. But study, when directed to sacred scripture and pursued in the right spirit, is an integral

part of spiritual life. Patañjali, in his *Yoga Sūtra*, lists *svādhyāya* or study as one of the essential preliminaries of yoga sādhanā. It is with a view to achieving some self-improvement in this area that we want to proceed.

The question is, how to *study* Swami Vivekananda. We have to mark at the outset the difference between devotional read-

ing and analytical, discriminative reading or study. The purpose of devotional reading is to evoke religious feelings; the purpose of study, on the other hand, is to clarify ideas and deepen the understanding. The one is passive; the other more active and participatory. The benefits of the one are immediate, but short-lived—feelings are transient. The benefits of serious study are more long lasting. One must always remember the psychological truth that thought creates feeling, and hence the inculcation of thought and idea is of primary importance.

In outlining a method of study I want to begin with an approach to one particular aspect or portion of *The Complete Works of Swami Vivekananda*, be it the letters, the conversations, or any particular set of lectures. Let us take, for instance, *Karma Yoga*—a slim volume in ninety-one pages. ... One could go to great lengths exploring the ideas in this book and a wide variety of study projects could be suggested. But before undertaking any advanced project one has to become thoroughly familiar with the contents of the book. We have to begin by reading the book—and this is where problems begin.

Most people think they know how to read, but they don't. Reading, like thinking, is a skilled occupation and requires some methodology to achieve the best results. I want to suggest an elementary five-step technique that can be utilized in any serious study. It is popularly known among college students as the SQ3R method—survey, question, read, recite, review—and will enable one to better understand, assimilate and retain the ideas in any book.

One begins by making a survey and getting an overview of the book as a whole. Turn to the title page and the table of contents and carefully note the chapter headings and sub-titles. Thumb through the book and note the format, the layout and the principal divisions. Try to get a feeling for the general subject, its major parts and their

mutual relationship. All this will give a broad idea of the scope of the material—it is a fly-over of the area we are going to explore on foot.

Step number two is to set the book aside and question oneself on the subject. In the context of *Karma Yoga* we can marshal our ideas about Karma, character, duty, non-attachment—the words/concepts that have been suggested by the previous survey. This step is the most important of the five. As the Vedanta says, all knowledge is within; and a person will be amazed to discover how much he already knows about the matter at hand. It is endlessly instructive to wander back through the corridors of memory and open those long-forgotten store-rooms where countless reels of mental videotapes are stacked and gathering dust. This exercise of recalling our own foreknowledge may take days or weeks, but it is well worth the time when we settle down to acquire new information.

The third step is to read through the book from beginning to end. The secret of effective reading at this stage is to pay special attention to leading words, phrases, and sequences of sentences; that is, to basic concepts, leading propositions, and arguments advanced. This will be especially easy in the case of a book like *Karma Yoga* where key words and phrases abound.

Recitation is the fourth step in the technique. It is not enough to keep the information in mind only; it has to be verbalized. This does not mean memorizing by rote and then playing back the lessons like a record or reciting like a parrot. The point is to put the teaching into our own words. We have to percolate the principles up through our own experience, refurnish them with our own illustrations and translate the whole into our own language. This is not just an exercise in vocalization; it will help in clarifying the understanding and in fixing the ideas in memory.

Finally, it is essential to review what

has been read. Retention of information is hardly possible without repetition; and this is what reviewing is—a renewing of impressions. This renewal may be effected by a contemplative recall of mental images or by an actual rereading of the study material. The latter will not come as a surprise, for any book worth reading once is worth reading again, and in the case of scriptural classics may form the subject of a lifetime study.

If a person follows the above five-step method he can rapidly master the material in any book. This mastery will provide him with a firm information base and a ready ability to branch out and undertake other more advanced study projects successfully.

But it will be helpful now to consider a more comprehensive, wholistic approach to the study of the *Complete Works*. These eight volume of over four thousands pages will seem formidable to any student of sacred knowledge. He will remember that they do not represent the ideology of a single doctrinal system, but cover the whole spectrum of philosophy and religion. Perhaps he will compare Swami Vivekananda with other seminal thinkers like Plato or Aristotle, and, in imagining the profundity of their thinking, intensify his own feels of trepidation. He will no doubt hear that the *Works* are like a gem with many facets; that the Swami spoke on many different levels, giving rise to apparent contradictions, etc... All this is likely to drive the timid student to conclude that he can't hope to understand.

But take heart, dear student! Brush aside such negative thoughts! They are wholly unfounded and it is certainly not impossible to grasp the teaching. In the first place, as the proverb says, the water is always clearest at the source. One should remember this with regard to all classics, that they are easier of access than the many books of learned commentary written upon them. Furthermore, Swami Vivekananda came to

earth to preach the gospel of a new religion. If sincere seekers on reading his words cannot make out the meaning, then he himself has failed in his mission. We do not believe that; on the contrary, we believe that anyone can understand the teachings. Needless to say, some thinking is necessary; but first we must evoke that feeling of *śraddhā*—faith in the teacher, in the truth of his words, and in our own ability to understand.

The first prerequisite for a study of the *Complete Works* is to read through the entire eight volumes. This might sound like an overwhelming assignment, but it isn't. Spending a short two hours a day reading approximately one hundred pages, a person can go through the entire material in forty days; spending three hours a day will enable one to complete the reading in less than a month. A certain friend while carrying a full course load at college, managed to finish the whole set of the *Complete Works* in two weeks. Of course one might say, so what? What is the virtue in scanning so much type all at once? But the hidden fact is that this is a clue to the enthusiasm and intensity of the student's interest. Others, who poke along, barely managing to complete one volume in a year, will scarcely attain anything in this life.

But even after a reading of the *Complete Works* a student will find himself in a state of confusion. The fact is that there is just too much material of wide variety to comprehend by going through volume after volume. We feel a need for some system of management, some principle of organization that will enable us to arrange and classify all the information. If a heavy monsoon rain falls on barren ground it will run off in every direction, causing erosion and floods; but if the ground is prepared the water can be contained. It is only when there is a proper system of drains, canals, storage tanks and reservoirs that the water



from on high can be directed to serve the tillers of the land.

Of all the systems of approach to the study of the *Complete Works* it is the chronological that stands out at the best. This is the method that will enable us to appreciate and fully comprehend the message of Swami Vivekananda. In following this method, the first step is to prepare a table listing all the separate letters, lectures, and conversations one after another in the order of their occurrence. This may sound like a mechanical and tedious process; on the contrary, it will require a good bit of detective work and investigative thinking. In fact, the preparation of the chronological table is a significant study project in itself that is immensely beneficial.

There are several strong selling points for using the chronological approach to the study of the *Complete Works*. In the first place, it enables one to form departments of thought. Each department, labelled by month and year, will contain one set of materials; the letters and lectures of 1894 will be one set, those of 1895 another set and so on. This temporal arrangement of material divides it up into manageable parts; this, in turn, facilitates learning and memory. In fact, the whole science of memory culture can be applied with amazing results to the chronologically ordered *Works*.

Another benefit in the chronological approach is that it enables one to trace the development of Swamiji's message and the evolution of his thought. That the Swami did struggle through stage after stage of growth in his thinking seems obvious from the reading of his letters and lectures. For instance, we read in one letter to E.T. Sturdy dated 31st October, 1895. 'Just now two young gentlemen, Mr Silverlock and his friend, left ... both of them want to know the rituals of my creed! This opened my eyes. The world in general must have some form ... It is absolutely necessary to form some ritual and have a Church ... That is

to say, we must fix on some ritual as fast as we can ... We will fix something grand, from birth to death of a man. A mere loose system of philosophy gets no hold on mankind.' These remarks, taken in the light of Swamiji's later teachings, will throw us into confusion until we read in a letter dated 2nd November 1895, 'I think you are right; we shall work on our own lines and let things grow.' Evidently Sturdy had questioned Swamiji's view and Swamiji, thinking the matter through again, had decided against it. Here then we see an evolution, a struggle for clarity and purpose and definition that runs throughout the *Works*.

A third advantage to the progressive, evolutionary approach to the study of the *Works* is that it enables us to resolve certain apparent contradictions. There is a popular notion that Swamiji's writings are a mine of self-contradiction and that it is difficult to penetrate and evaluate his true position on this or that issue. One writer, in an introduction to a collection of Vivekananda's teachings says, 'Vivekananda was the last person in the world to worry about formal consistency. He almost always spoke extempore, fired by the circumstances of the moment, addressing himself to the condition of a particular group of hearers, reacting to the intent of a certain question. That was his nature—and he was supremely indifferent if his words of today seemed to contradict those of yesterday.'<sup>1</sup> Now, it is true that there are certain apparent contradictions in Swamiji's teachings. For instance in 1896 and 1897 he often spoke about the necessity of following the 'line of least resistance' in religious development as the natural and easy way to progress. But in a conversation with Sister Nivedita in 1899 he says, 'I have been thinking for days about that line of least resistance, and it is a base fallacy ... as for me

1. *Teachings of Swami Vivekananda* (Calcutta, Advaita Ashrama, 1976), p. 37.

I'm never going to think of it again.<sup>2</sup> This apparent contradiction, if it can ever be called such, is completely resolved by the chronological approach. We clearly see that Swamiji had, on mature thought, simply changed his opinion on this subject.

Another benefit of the chronology is that it can be easily meshed with the biography; one will complement and enhance the other. If I read 'The Song of the Sannyasin' for instance, by itself, I will attain one degree of happiness; but if I also read the biography and reminiscences of that day along with the letters written before and after—all this will add a richness to my appreciation of the poem. What is being suggested here is that references to the relevant portions of the *Life*, the *Reminiscences* and other works be dovetailed into the chronology along with the letters and lectures; thus, we will be directed first to read a letter, then a lecture, then a poem, then a portion of the biography, etc. Proceeding in this way, a fuller picture of Swamiji's life and thought will emerge.

I have tried to catalogue some of the benefits of following the chronological approach in the study of the *Complete Works*. It is obvious that we need some system to comprehend and organize the immense amount of material contained therein. The

progressive, day-by-day arrangement will serve that need well.

In conclusion I want to make two points. The first is that reading and study are learned skills. Just because we can dash through a novel a day doesn't mean that we know how to read. Just because we have received degrees for studying through high school and college doesn't mean that we know how to study. One has to do a bit of introspection here and come to know if there is a lack of practical know-how. If so, then it would be well to make a study of study; that is, to obtain one of the many how-to-study manuals and take guidance therefrom. Working in this way will gradually improve the practice of *svādhyāya*.

The second point is simply this. There are hundreds of books on the Vedānta philosophy. The Ramakrishna-Vivekananda literature in itself is vast—we cannot hope to read and master all these books. This is the age of specialization. If a person wants to study in depth, he has to limit himself to a definite province; he has to lay down certain boundary lines. This does not preclude discursive reading, but it means that all serious efforts should be concentrated in one area. The *Complete Works of Swami Vivekananda* are the source-books for the religion of the New Age. Why not focus the mind here, remembering the truth of the old proverb, 'When you water the root, you water the whole tree.'

2. *Reminiscences of Swami Vivekananda* (Calcutta: Advaita Ashrama, 1961), p. 273

## REVIEWS AND NOTICES

**ANALYTICAL SOLUTION TO THE PROBLEM OF FINDING ULTIMATE REALITY.** BY ASHOK KUMAR BHATTACHARYA. Published by Firma KLM Pvt Ltd, 257-B Bepin Bihari Ganguli Street, Calcutta 700 012. 1981. Pp. 132, Rs 45.

The search for the ultimate Reality of Truth is perennial. The human mind has engaged itself to find out the truth behind the visible. The attempt to find the ultimate Truth is *darsana*

(philosophy), religion as well as science. Whether it is for the sage Nārada of the Upaniṣads or Parmenides of the early Greek thought, the problem has been the same as it was for Śaṅkara or for Rene Descartes in later centuries. The idealists have tried to find a unitary principle behind the phenomena but the realistic analysts have not come across such a principle. For a Buddhist or to a Humean it is difficult to comprehend a cause that could be regarded as a lasting principle claiming the title to ultimate Reality.

The author of the book originally entitled *Metaphysics* (1976) presents an analytical solution to the problem of finding the ultimate Reality in the revised second edition which is under review. Although the writer does not intend or claim to have departed from the traditional Upaniṣadic philosophy or from the thinking of European origin, his rediscovery of the ultimate Reality through analytical method is definitely novel. His initial training in engineering and physics, grounded in genuine philosophical interest, has made him work seriously to solve the riddles of our existence. His analytical approach leads to a rather unusual destination which might be very disturbing for the analysts group of thinkers. He comes to realize that Brahman is the universal subject of perception and our life is an imagined or dreamt game (*līlā*) of the ultimate Reality. The experiences in dream, death and Yogic trance provide ample evidences for the indubitable existence of the agency behind such experiences. The Upaniṣads, Śaṅkara, Descartes, Leibnitz and others have reached similar conclusions, but not through the analytical method. The author uses a new method to confirm old conviction.

The book is an excellent attempt to use modern methodology to handle traditional problems and makes older mysteries and riddles intelligible to the contemporary mind in familiar terminology. It is equally interesting to a student of philosophy and to experts in science and to lay people. Some of the technical terms in Sanskrit have been repeatedly mis-spelt (example: *sattvā* for *sattā* or *satva*) which should be corrected in future editions.

DR S. P. DUBEY  
Joint-Secretary

Indian Philosophical Congress

### BENGALI

**JAP-DHYAN:** BY SWAMI SATYANANDA. Published by Sri Sri Ramakrishna Sevayatan, No 2, P. K. Saha Lane, Calcutta-700 036. 1980. Pp. 12+88. Rs. 6.

Jap-Dhyān is a small book meant for devotees who are intent on developing the spiritual life through practices of Japa and meditation. After a good introduction the book continues in two long chapters on Japa and meditation, and finally ends with a few devotional songs on Sri Ramakrishna. The author, a devotee of Sri Ramakrishna, is also a musician who spent, according to the book, long years in spiritual sādhanā. The book, is in fact, a series of answers to various questions raised by the devotees regarding

meditation and Japa. Some of the answers are illuminating and will inspire sincere souls. The exact names of the *rāgas* and *tālas* of the songs may be mentioned in the next print, so that more devotees may get the benefit.

SWAMI JITATMANANDA  
Ramakrishna Math  
Hyderabad

### KANNADA

**BADUKALU KALIYIRI** BY SWAMI JAGADATMANANDA. Vivaka Prakashan, Krishna Kutira, Saligrama. South Karnataka, 576 225. Pp. xiv+215. Rs. 16.

*Learn to Live* is the expressive title of this important book from the pen of a Swamiji who is involved in shaping the lives of thousands of young students. Situated in the vortex of the hopes and frustrations of modern youth in our country, the author has keenly felt the absence of reliable books in Indian languages on the subject of self-building on the model of the famous book by Samuel Smiles on *Self-Help*. Here is his answer to the need of the day, based upon his own experience, observation and study. He draws upon the lives and examples of many illustrious personalities of the past and the present, from the West and the East; his style is epigrammatic and the lessons go home, even to elderly readers.

The first part of the book, *Secret of Success*, analyzes the life-situation in its several salient ingredients and prescribes appropriate corrective and dynamic measures to turn difficulties into opportunities and openings into spring-boards. To note a few of the important guidelines:

'Take interest in what work comes to you instead of waiting for an interesting assignment to offer itself. Effort with enthusiasm generates its own inspiration.'

'Choose an Ideal and organize your life around it. Make it your life-breath.'

'Leave the past behind, let the future take care of itself. Concentrate on the present. Have your attention on the immediate step before you, do not waste time on dreaming of the ultimate goal.'

'Hasten slowly. Nothing is insignificant. Whatever you do, do as perfectly as you can.'

'There is no difficulty that can permanently stand against your determined will.'

The second part of the book expounds the potentialities of the human being, the latent powers and capabilities that are waiting to be activated.

With abundant illustrations from contemporary life in Russia and countries in Eastern Europe, the author underlines the amazing powers of consciousness and describes the techniques for developing them to make life more meaningful. He makes the following observations with documentary proof:

The mind is different from the brain

Exteriorization is a capacity that can be cultivated

Thought-reading has a rationale behind it  
Hypnotism reveals that there is an element in our consciousness that plays the Chitrageeta and

records every minute happening dating from the time of birth (and even earlier).

Faith has untold power to heal, to achieve, to surmount.

Not a page of this fascinating treatise is dull. It communicates the author's vision, confidence and inspiration. Here is a book that deserves to be translated into the major Indian languages and prescribed for non-detailed reading in the colleges

SRI M P PANDIT  
Sri Aurobindo Ashram  
Pondicherry.

## NEWS AND REPORTS

### SRI RAMAKRISHNA ASHRAMA, TRICHUR

Report for 1981-1982

**Religious.** Daily puja, *āratrikam* and bhajan were conducted in the temple of Sri Ramakrishna. The Swamis of this centre delivered a number of lectures and discourses on diverse topics in the Ashrama and out stations. Apart from monthly spiritual retreats, an annual five-day retreat was conducted in which 270 devotees took part. Birth anniversaries of religious celebrities were observed with special puja, discourses etc

The publication department brought out new editions of 11 books and 4 new books during the period. It publishes a monthly journal *Prabuddhakeralam* in Malayalam. The Ashrama has its own printing press.

The town branch at Punkunnam runs a library and a reading-room with books 4,850, periodicals and dailies 16. Free classes to coach students for promoting Sanskrit were conducted

**Educational.** The Ashrama runs a boys' Gurukula oriented to the traditional ideals of Hindu life. There were 134 boys of whom 27 were free boarders. The Vidyamandiram (School) had 1,267 boys in the High School section and 773 pupils (boys: 403; girls: 370) in the Lower Primary section. Nearly 550 children were fed daily with food materials supplied by the CARE.

**Medical:** The hospital of the centre treated 10,688 outdoor patients (new: 4,959; repeated: 5,729) and 1,082 indoor patients, and conducted 137 surgical operations. It needs generous help from the public to continue its service activities.

The Ashrama pays special attention to Harijan welfare work. It maintains one social-

service centre and a nursery school at the nearby Harijan colony

### RAMAKRISHNA MISSION CALCUTTA STUDENTS' HOME

Report for 1979-80 and 1980-81

This centre, started in 1916, conducts a hostel, specially for poor and meritorious college students, which had 106 boarders in 1981 of whom 60 were totally free and 11 were half-free of charges. Daily puja and evening *ārati* were carried in the temple. Birthdays of Sri Ramakrishna, Holy Mother, Swami Vivekananda and other religious celebrities were observed along with Kālī-pūjā, Sarasvatī-pūjā etc.

The Ramakrishna Mission Shilpapiṭha, a polytechnic college, offers four-year diploma courses in civil, electrical and mechanical engineering sponsored by the Government. There were 640 students on the roll. There are four workshops and a library with 7,500 books, 5 dailies and 6 periodicals. There is also a book-bank for the benefit of those who cannot afford to buy costly textbooks.

The centre also runs a public library and a free reading-room in which 703 new books were added during these two years. The Homeopathic dispensary treated nearly 200 patients on every Sunday under the care of four efficient doctors. The Assembly Hall of the centre was well utilized for socio-religious discourses, music recitals, and film shows for the inmates as well as the public. On every Thursday morning the Home fed more than 150 local poor people with *khichuri*. The Home has so far published 21 religious books.

## NOTES AND COMMENTS

### *The Spectre of Drought*

With the failure of monsoon this season, the spectre of drought is looming large in the horizon of several States in India, though the situation has not created a panic thanks to the large buffer stock of grain held by the Government. Frequent occurrence of drought is an unavoidable feature of all those geographical areas which depend on the monsoon. Since man has no control over the atmosphere, he can meet the vagaries of the monsoon only on the land. India has achieved a commendable increase in agricultural production, but this has not been steady or even. The imperative need now is to stabilize agricultural production and make it independent of the mercies of the rain-god.

It is estimated that India has 143 million hectares of arable land. Only a fourth of this is under irrigation, the rest is all rain fed. The general belief is that the only solution to the problem of drought is to bring more areas under irrigation. This prompted us to start several gigantic irrigation projects which have so far cost more than 10,000 crores of rupees, with another 10,000 crores projected by the Sixth Five Year Plan. However, after 30 years of experience we are now beginning to realize that this solution is neither simple nor very effective.

For one thing, irrigation will increase production only if it is supported by other factors like high-yield variety, fertilizers and efficient crop management. Under ideal conditions, irrigated land should yield 4 to 5 tonnes of grain per hectare, but at present it is hardly 1.7 tonnes on an average. So unless productivity increases proportionately to the increase in irrigation facilities, the enormous investment in large irrigation projects cannot be justified. This has been admitted by the Planning Commission in one of its reports which says, 'In spite of the large investments made in the irrigation sector and the phenomenal growth of irrigation during the past 30 years, the returns from the investment, both in terms of yield and as finance, are very disappointing.'

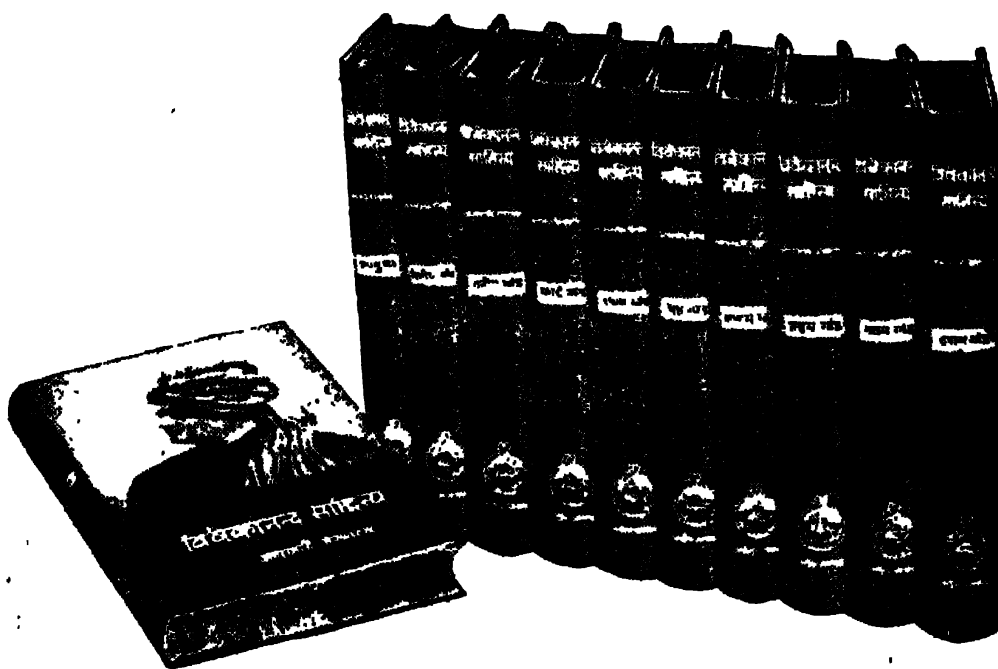
Secondly, many, if not all, of the major and medium irrigation projects at present benefit comparatively more humid areas and, in a few cases, areas where there has already been a surplus of water. Another point is that indiscriminate increase in irrigation has caused salinity, alkalinity and other soil management problems. A fourth point to be noted is that the farmer can make full use of irrigation water only when the supply is under his control.

These facts lead us to two important conclusions. One is that more attention should be paid to small-scale irrigation projects, and more encouragement should be given to farmers in the form of subsidies, loans and technical advice to own private irrigation facilities like wells, tube-wells and ponds. The second point is that greater attention should be given to dry land farming. At present over 60 per cent of the area under rice is rain fed; about 45 per cent of our cereal production and 75 per cent of pulses and oil seeds come from dry lands. It is these dry lands which experience wide fluctuations in crop production and are effected most by drought. Through better water, soil and crop management it is necessary to improve agricultural conditions in these areas.

## ● विवेकानन्द साहित्य

कुल १० खंड, डबल डिमाई साइज में, अनुक्रमणिका समेत पृष्ठ संख्या प्रति खंड लगभग ४५० ; मजबूत और आकर्षक सजिल्द नव प्रकाशित द्वितीय संस्करण का मूल्य प्रति खंड १६ रु०, सम्पूर्ण सेट १५० रु० । पूरा सेट एक साथ रेल द्वारा मंगाने से रेल-खर्च नहीं लगेगा । पुस्तक विक्रेताओं को विशेष कमीशन दिया जाता है ।

इन ग्रन्थों में स्वामीजी के दर्शन, धर्म, राष्ट्र, समाज आदि विषयक अोजपूर्ण व्याख्यानों तथा 'गम्भीर लेखों का पूर्ण संकलन है जो अंग्रेजी में प्रकाशित और अप्रकाशित उनकी सभी रचनाओं, पत्रों, कविताओं, व्याख्यानों, प्रवचनों तथा कथाओं का हिन्दी अनुवाद है । अनुवादकों में पं० सूर्यकान्त त्रिपाठी निराला, पं० सुमित्रानन्दन पंत, डा० प्रभाकर माचवे, श्री फणीश्वरनाथ 'रेणु', डा० चर्मदेश्वर प्रसाद आदि ख्यातिलब्ध साहित्यकारों के नाम उल्लेखनीय हैं ।



अद्वैत आश्रम

५ डिही इटाली रोड

कलकत्ता ७०००१४

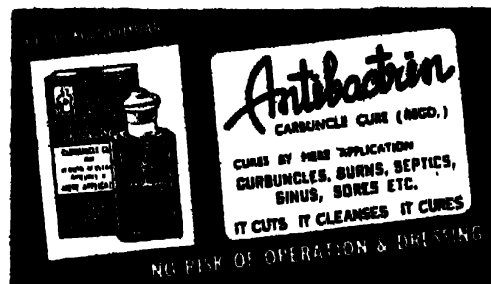
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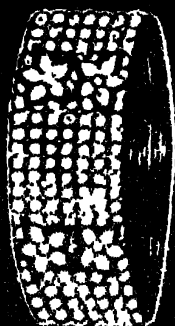
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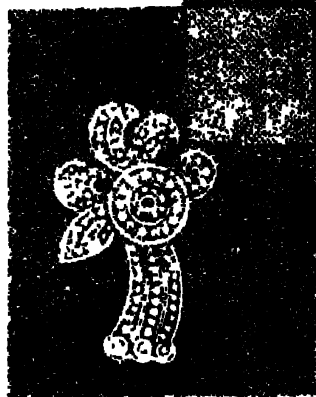
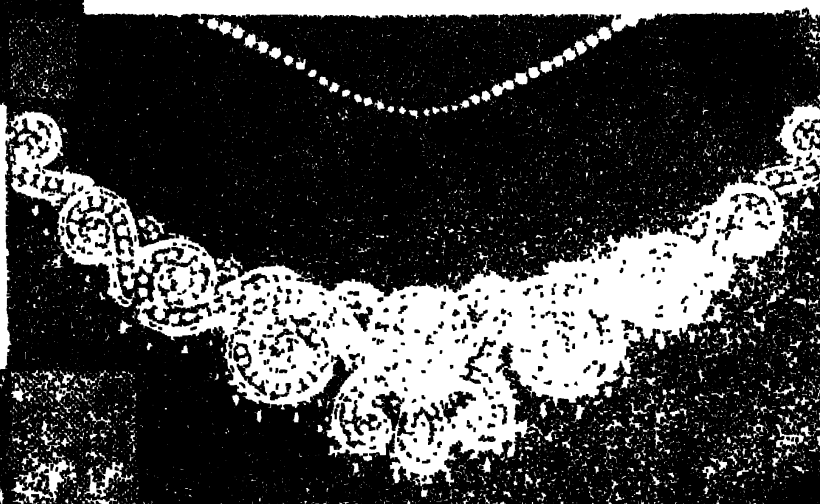
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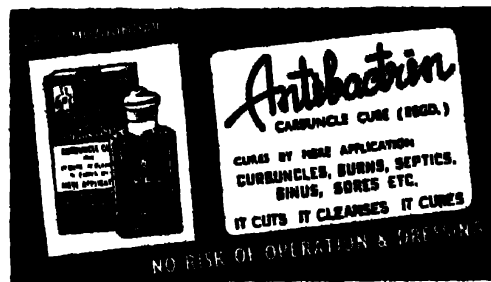
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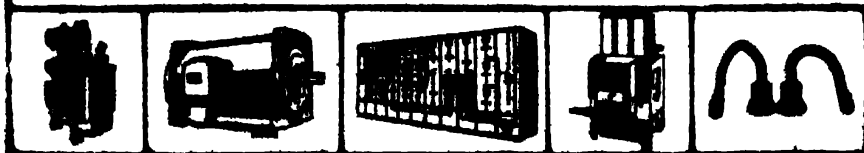


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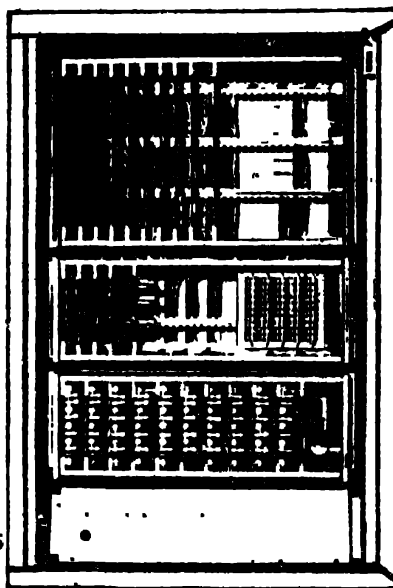
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# Prabuddha Bharata

VOL. 88

MARCH 1983

No. 3

Arise ! Awake ! And stop not till the Goal is reached.

## INTEGRAL VISION OF VEDIC SEERS\*

*'Truth is one : sages call It by various names'*

तस्माद्विराजतायत विराजो अधि पुरुषः ।  
स जातो अत्यरिच्यत पश्चाद्भूमिमथो पुरः ॥

1 From him<sup>1</sup> was born Virāj, and from Virāj (was born) Puruṣa.<sup>2</sup> As soon as he<sup>3</sup> was born, he became manifested,<sup>4</sup> and afterwards [created] the earth [and] then physical bodies.<sup>5</sup>

*Ṛg-Veda 10.90.5*

\* *Puruṣa-sūkta* is continued here.

1. 'From him' (*tasmāt*) is interpreted by Sāyana as 'from the *ādipuruṣa* (Primal Person)', i. e. God, the Paramātmān. Western writers take 'from' to mean 'from the one-fourth' mentioned in the previous stanza.

2. 'From Puruṣa was born Virāj and from Virāj was born Puruṣa' is one of the several instances of the use of paradox in the Vedas. Compare, for instance, 'From Aditi was born Dakṣa, and from Dakṣa was born Aditi' (*Ṛg-Veda* 10.72.4). Dr. Muir suggests that here Virāj may stand for the female counterpart of Puruṣa, as Aditi is the counterpart of Dakṣa. Sāyana explains the paradox as follows: 'The Supreme Spirit by His Māyā created the Cosmos (*brahmāṇḍa*) and entered into it as the individual souls'.

3. Sāyana takes 'he' to mean Virāj, others take it for Puruṣa.

4. Sāyana interprets *ati-aricyata* as *vyatirikto-abhūt* 'became different', that is, 'He assumed the forms of creatures like gods, men and animals—other than Himself.'

5. The meaning given is Sāyana's. Ranganātha Muni (a Śrī Vaiṣṇava commentator) renders it as, 'He (Brahmā) transcends the earth behind and in front'. Griffith says: 'He spread eastward and westward over the earth'. Macdonnell: 'He reached beyond the earth and behind and also before'. Sāyana interprets *purah* as 'physical bodies'. Bhattabhāskara does it as 'days'.

## ABOUT THIS NUMBER

Sri Sarada Devi, Swami Vivekananda and Sri Ramakrishna are the special manifestations of the *sat*, *cit* and *ānanda* aspects of Brahman born for the welfare of humanity in the present age. This is the theme of this month's EDITORIAL.

A talk given by Swami Subodhananda (a direct disciple of Sri Ramakrishna and endearingly called 'Khoka' by his monastic brothers) in 1897 at Madras appeared in the November 1898 issue of *Prabuddha Bharata* under the title SANNYASA AND BRAHMACHARYA, and is reproduced in the current issue.

IN YOGA AND SUPERSENSUOUS EXPERIENCE Swami Yatiswarananda, past Vice-President of the Ramakrishna Order and Mission, speaks of two types of supersensuous experiences: lower psychic experiences, and higher spiritual experiences.

There is in every man an inherent urge to grow, develop, expand, because each soul is potentially divine, points out Swami Shraddhanandaji in MAN MAGNIFIED. The author is a senior monk of the Ramakrishna Order and is now the head of the Vedanta Society of Sacramento, U.S.A.

IN MYTH: ITS POWER AND GLORY Swami Nityabodhanandaji makes an original and thought-provoking analysis of Dr. Jung's contribution to the study of Myth in the light of yoga psychology. The author who is the founder-president of the Vedanta Centre, Geneva, is well known in Europe for his creative work in East-West rapport, insightful philosophical observations and his books in French.

This month's MUSINGS OF THE MUSAFIR (*musāfir* means 'traveller' in Urdu), who is 'Caught for Worship at the Right Place', are on the imperative need to install a statue of Swami Vivekananda at a prominent place in Delhi, the metropolis of the nation. What could serve this purpose better than the already existing pedestal near the India Gate there, providentially

kept vacant as if for the statue of Swamiji?

IN A NEW ALTER FOR THE FLAME OF TIBETAN BUDDHISM (illustrated), the reader will get a glimpse of the valiant struggle of Tibetan refugees to keep alive their culture in their adopted land. The author, Swami Atmarupananda, is now a monastic member of the Vedanta Society of Southern California, Hollywood.

In this month's FORUM FOR INTER-RELIGIOUS UNDERSTANDING Dr. Amaladoss S. J. writes about the 'Symbolic Dimension of Christianity' making out his case that Christianity can claim a divinely ordained uniqueness among world religions without competing with them for superiority. The author who is the Provincial of Jesuits in North India is a distinguished theologian, thinker and musician.

We are grateful to Dr Donald Szantho Harrington, Emiretus Senior Minister of the Community Church of New York for allowing us to publish his beautiful sermon on the life of the great American savant Ralph Waldo Emerson in our PROFILES IN GREATNESS column.

VIVEKANANDA AT THE LAND'S END is the libretto of the cantata performed as a part of the anniversary celebration of the Vivekananda Fourth July Festival held by the Vedanta Society of New York in 1982. John Schlenck who composed it is a professional musician.

IN HOLY PLACES IN KASHMIR (illustrated) Prof. Chaman Lal Sapru, Professor and Head of the Department of Hindi, Government College for Women, Srinagar, gives a brief account of the important religious centres in Kashmir many of which are not known to ordinary tourists.

Dr. Anil Baran Ray, Professor of Political Science at the University of Burdwan, West Bengal, has prepared a brief note on 'Vinoba Bhave's Path of Peaceful Revolution' for our HUMAN TRENDS feature.

# ONE REALITY, THREE MANIFESTATIONS

(EDITORIAL)

Life is a continuous interaction between the individual and the cosmos, between the inner nature and the outer nature. The interaction takes various forms the most important of which is the satisfaction of human needs. Though human wants are unlimited they can be reduced to three basic urges: to exist, to know, to enjoy. Answering these, the objective world around us also shows three properties: it exists (*asti*); it impinges on our consciousness (*bhāti*); it gives joy (*priyam*).<sup>1</sup> This striking correspondence between the inner life and the outer world points to a single common Reality characterized by self-Existence, self-Awareness and intrinsic Bliss. The ultimate, absolute Reality is known as Brahman in Vedānta.

Furthermore, it is a matter of common experience that the three basic urges mentioned above are insatiable, and that the external world can give us only partial and temporary satisfaction. This shows that man's real nature is infinite Spirit and that his body and mind are not his real nature. It also shows that the world around us is only an appearance of true Reality. For total, ultimate, everlasting fulfilment man must transcend the external world, transcend his body and mind, and discover the very foundation of his personality, the Atman, as an inseparable part of Brahman.

In order to transcend the world the three basic urges (to exist, to know and to enjoy) should be unified into a one-pointed, intense aspiration to realize the Absolute. Secondly, the aspirant should constantly practise discrimination between the Real

and the unreal, and reject the appearance as 'not this, not this' (*neti, neti*). When, through these disciplines, he at last realizes the non-dual Absolute, he attains complete satisfaction and freedom from bondage and sorrow for ever.

However, this transcendent experience does not explain how the empirical world of appearance has come to have the three properties of existence, visibility and attractiveness (*asti, bhāti, priyam*), and how it fulfils our basic needs, though partially and temporarily, in ordinary life. In order to understand this man should return, after the highest non-dual experience, to the empirical world and realize how the one supreme Reality manifests itself in diverse ways. This return journey takes the form of the affirmation, 'this is Brahman, this is Brahman' (*iti, iti*).

Sri Ramakrishna describes the experience of the non-dual Absolute (which he calls *nirva*) as Jñāna, and the experience of the world as the glorious manifestation of Brahman (which he calls *līlā*) as Vijñāna. According to him the latter is a fuller, more integral and advanced experience. Explaining these concepts, he says:

The Jnani gives up his identification with worldly things discriminating 'Not this, not this'. Only then can he realize Brahman. It is like reaching the roof of a house by leaving the steps behind, one by one. But the Vijnani, who is more intimately acquainted with Brahman, realizes something more. He realizes that the steps are made of the same materials as the roof: bricks, lime, brick-dust. The man coming down from samadhi perceives that it is Brahman that has become the ego, the universe and all living beings. This is known as Vijnana.<sup>2</sup>

1. Cf. अस्ति भाति प्रियं रूपं नामचेत्यंशपञ्चकम् ।

आद्यत्रयं ब्रह्मरूपं जगद्रूपं ततो द्वयम् ॥

*Dṛgdrśya-Viveka*, 20

2. *The Gospel of Sri Ramakrishna* (Madras: Sri Ramakrishna Math, 1974) p. 30.



In the Sāmkhya-Yoga thought everything in the universe of experience is regarded as a manifestation of the three *guṇas* (*sattva*, *rajas* and *tamas*) of Prakṛtī, variety being caused by differences in their proportion and mode of action. On the other hand, in Vedantic thought everything is regarded as a manifestation of the three aspects of Brahman—*sat*, *cit* and *ānanda*—variety being due to the differences in the degree of their manifestation. Though Brahman is all-pervading, it is not known as such by most people because of the presence of a mysterious form of ignorance known as *Māyā* or *ajñāna*. *Māyā* has two powers: a 'veiling power' (*āvarana śakti*) which hides the real nature of Brahman; and a 'projecting power' (*viksepa śakti*) which produces all the illusory objects of the world.

In some Vedantic treatises *Māyā* is described as consisting of three veils. The outermost veil, known as *asattāpādaka-ajñāna*, has a preponderance of *tamas*; it hides all the three aspects of Brahman—*sat*, *cit* and *ānanda*. When this veil is lifted the whole universe is experienced as *sat*, pure existence, or as an ocean of power. The second veil, known as *abhānāpādaka-ajñāna*, has a preponderance of *rajas*; it hides the *cit* and *ānanda* aspects of Brahman. With the lifting of this veil the whole universe is experienced as *cit*, pure consciousness. The innermost veil, known as *anānandāpādaka-ajñāna*, has a preponderance of *sattva*; it hides the *ānanda* aspect of Brahman. As this veil is lifted, the whole universe appears as a limitless ocean of bliss. Spiritual life is the progressive unfolding of *sat-cit-ānanda*.

This unfolding is the result of a transformation of consciousness. How this transformation takes place has been vividly described in the third chapter of the *Taittirīya-Upaniṣad* through the story of Bhṛgu's seeking instruction from his father

regarding the nature of Brahman. Śrī Ramakrishna has illustrated the same truth in his characteristic way by punning on the names of the three great founders of Bengal Vaiṣṇavism: Advaita Gosvāmin, Caitanya Mahāprabhu and Nityānanda. He says:

Chaitanya. Consciousness is awakened after Advaita-jnana, the Knowledge of the non-dual Brahman. Then one perceives that God alone exists in all being as consciousness. After this realization comes Ananda, Bliss. Advaita, Chaitanya, Nityananda.<sup>3</sup>

#### *Sat as the Divine Mother*

In ordinary empirical life we experience the *sat* aspect of Brahman in three ways or modes: as being or existence,<sup>4</sup> as unity, as power.

The most fundamental of human experience is 'I exist'. And when we look at the objective world (the external world of material objects as well as the internal world of images and ideas) our simplest experience is that of being: 'The tree is', 'the thought is', 'they are', etc. Vedānta does not accept non-being in the absolute sense. The word *asat* does not mean non-being. Even non-existent things like the horns of a rabbit or the child of a barren woman, and illusory objects like the 'snake in the rope', have some sort of 'being', often distinguished as *subsistence*. According to Rāmānuja even dream objects are real, being actual creations of the Lord. *Sat* or being includes both existence and subsistence. Advaita Vedānta distinguishes three types of *sat* or being: *pāramārthika-*

3. *ibid*, p. 212.

4. 'Being' is a wider term than 'existence'. In contemporary Western philosophy 'existence' is used to refer to a person's experience of his own existence, whereas 'being' is used with reference to all objects and contents of experience—living or non-living, real or unreal.

*sattā* or absolute being, *vyāvahārika-sattā* or empirical being and *prātibhāsika-sattā* or illusory being. All these are different dimensions of *sat*.

The second mode of *sat* is unity. Though the world consists of myriads of different objects, there is one fundamental unifying force holding together all beings—electrons in the atom, atoms in the molecule, cells in the body, planets in the solar system, stars in the galaxy, and so on. At the social or inter-personal level this unifying force manifests itself as love, holding together men and women in the family, group and society. In the *Viṣṇu-purāṇa* and in Bengal Vaisnavism, this unifying force is known as *sandhunī*. Love is thus an expression of the *sandhunī śakti* of *sat*. In his lectures on 'Practical Vedanta', Swami Vivekananda says:

Everything that makes for oneness is truth. Love is truth. Love binds, love makes for that oneness. You become one the mother with the child, families with the city, the whole world becomes one with the animals. For love is Existence, God Himself, and all this is the manifestation of that One Love, more or less expressed.<sup>5</sup>

The third mode of *sat* is power, *śakti*. Existence is not a mere passive or static state, but a state of continuous change, and change means the transformation of energy, power. Modern science has shown that matter is a form of energy and space-time is dynamic in its nature. In India the idea that being or existence is a state of power finds expression even in the *Rg-Veda*. Describing the primordial condition of Reality before creation, the famous 'Creation Hymn' states that 'then the one breathless Being breathed by its own power.'<sup>6</sup> In the Upanisads this power is

called *Prāṇa* (which literally means 'breath') and the whole universe is said to come out of *Prāṇa* and vibrate in *Prāṇa*.<sup>7</sup> In some places this power is identified with *vāk*, the Word. Under the influence of Sāṃkhya philosophy, the concept of *Prāṇa* later on gave way to that of *Māyā* in Advaita Vedanta and the concept of *śakti* in the Tantras.

All these three aspects—existence, unity and power—of *sat* find their highest personification and glorification in the Divine Mother. She is Brahman regarded as *sat*. Not that the *cit* and *ānanda* aspects of Brahman are absent in Her; but it is the *sat* aspect of Brahman that is Her dominant and distinctive nature, and it is more gloriously manifested in Her than anywhere else.

It is the mother who gives existence to the child. Every living being comes out of a mother, and there is no exception to this rule. Even the non-living beings owe their existence to a mother, a matrix; the Mother of the Universe. For each being has its own unique qualities (*gunas*) and all *gunas* inhere in the universal matrix of the Divine Mother. She is the great *brahma-yoni* (Womb of Brahman) mentioned in the Vedas, from whom originate universes and galaxies. Sri Ramakrishna had a symbolic vision of this Womb of Brahman in the form of a large triangle of living light giving birth to innumerable worlds at every moment.<sup>8</sup>

Again, it is the Divine Mother who holds together the whole universe in Her all-pervading embrace. It is the great Mother Heart that is the source of all unity.

7. यदिदं किञ्च जगत् सर्वं प्राण एजति निःसृतम् ।

*Katha-Upanisad* 6.2

5. *The Complete Works of Swami Vivekananda* (Calcutta: Advaita Ashrama, 1976) vol. 2, p. 304

6. आनीद् अवातं स्वधया तदेकं

*Rg-Veda*, 10.129.2.

8. Swami Vivekananda too had a similar experience. See, Swami Saradananda, *Sri Ramakrishna the Great Master* (1970) p. 201.

all harmony, all love. She is the great *sandhinī-śakti* of the universe.

Divine power is not a mere formless, impersonal material principle. Rather, it is a living, conscious force which can assume a concrete personal form. In India, right from prehistoric times, the personal aspect of divine power has been regarded as female, the Divine Mother. In the *Rg-Veda* she is known as Aditi, the Boundless. She is the mother of all gods who are therefore called Ādityas ('sons of Aditi'). As the following hymn shows, She is identified with the all-pervading divine Existence: 'Aditi is the sky; Aditi is the atmosphere; Aditi is father, mother and son; all the gods are Aditi, even so all men; and what is and what will be is Aditi'<sup>9</sup> As the power of Vāk, the Word or Logos, the Divine Mother is described by the Vedic sages as the creative power of the universe and the awakener of higher thoughts. In the remarkable hymn *Devī-Sūktam*, the Divine Mother as Vāk reveals Her own supreme divinity as the power of Rudras, Vasus, Ādityas and all the gods, as the support of Mitra, Varuna, Indra, Agni, Aśvins, Moon and Sun; as the queen of the world; as the giver of prosperity; as the wielder of men's destiny; as the all-pervading Spirit transcending heaven and earth.<sup>10</sup> In the *Kena-Upaniṣad* the Divine Mother appears as the exceedingly beautiful (*bahū-śobhamānā*) Umā to

reveal the knowledge of Brahman even to the gods.

It is, however, in the *Candī (Devī-māhātmya)* and the Tantras that the motherhood of God attains its fullest development and independence. The *Viṣṇu-Yāmala* classifies all the different attributes of the Divine Mother under three aspects. The first is the *parā (transcendent)* aspect in which she exists as the Primordial Power (*ādyā-śakti*) pervading and sustaining the whole universe. The second aspect, known as *sūkṣma* or subtle, is the power of Vāk, the Word or Logos. In the third aspect known as *sthūla* or gross, She manifests Herself in human forms. These human forms are many, some terrible and some gentle and beautiful. The most important of these are ten, known as the Daśa Mahāvidyās. They are: Kālī, Tārā, Śodaśī (Tripurasundarī), Bhuvaneśvarī, Chinnamastā, Bhairavī, Dhumāvatī, Bagalā, Mātangī (Sarasvatī) and Kamalā (Lakṣmī).

The Divine Mother exercises Her power in three different ways. A unique doctrine common to the three Āgama traditions—Vaiṣṇava (Pāñcarātra), Śaiva and Śākta—is the five-fold activity of God, namely, creation (*śrīṣṭi*), maintenance (*sthiti*), dissolution (*pralaya*), obstruction or concealment (*nigraha* or *trodhāna*) and redemption (*anugraha*). All these activities are carried out by the Divine Mother through Her three powers.

The first power brings about the creation, maintenance and dissolution of the universe. The whole universe is the body of the Divine Mother and it is she who undergoes these changes. In other words, these changes affect only the *sat* aspect of Brahman, the *cit* and *ānanda* aspects being immutable. This idea is expressed in the image of Kālī dancing on the chest of Śiva. A well-known verse attributed to Śrī Śaṅkara says: 'Śiva is able to create (or control) the universe only if He is united with Śakti; otherwise the God wouldn't

<sup>9</sup>. अदितिर्द्यौर्दितिर्न्तर्िक्षं

अदितिर्माता स पिता स पुत्रः ।

विश्वे देवा अदितिः पञ्च जना

अदितिर्जानमदिनिर्जन्तृत्वम् ॥

*Rg-Veda* 1.89.10 (also cf. *Katha-Upaniṣad* 4.7)

<sup>10</sup>. अहं रुद्रेभिर्वमुभिश्चरा-

म्यहमादित्यैरुत विश्वदेवैः ।

... महिना सं बभूव ॥

*Rg-Veda* 10.125 1-8.

be able even to move.<sup>11</sup> Sri Ramakrishna explains this truth as follows:

The Primordial Power is ever at play. She is creating, preserving and destroying in play, as it were. This power is called Kali. Kali is verily Brahman, and Brahman is verily Kali. It is one and the same Reality. When we think of It as inactive, that is to say, not engaged in the acts of creation, preservation and destruction, then we call It Brahman. But when It engages in these activities, we call it Kali or Sakti.<sup>12</sup>

The second power of the Divine Mother is the power of delusion. At the level of the individual it takes the form of *nigraha* which means the limitation or contraction of the powers of the soul. At the cosmic level it takes the form of *modhāna*, the disappearance or hiding of God, that is, the inability of the soul to perceive Reality. This is what the Advaitins call *māyā*, *avidyā*, *ajñāna* or ignorance.

The third power of the Mother is *anugraha-sakti*, the power of blessing, redemption. It is the power which enables man to have true faith in God and realize the ultimate Reality. Through this power Mother liberates him from delusion, bondage and suffering. However it is important to understand that God's grace need not, does not, always take the form of a gentle, soothing and pleasing experience. It may come hidden in suffering, frustration, misfortune and in the apparently terrible, unjust and evil events. In many people the veil of *Māyā* is so thick, and the ego so strong, that only shocking experiences can free them from the illusions and delusions they are hugging to themselves. Thus the redemptive power of the Divine Mother has two aspects, the gentle and the terrible.

The gentle aspect of this Mother Power has in the modern age found its highest expression and embodiment in Sri Sarada Devi, the immaculate consort of Sri Ramakrishna. As the Incarnation of the Divine Mother, Sarada Devi had in her person the potentiality of all the three modes of the *sat* aspect of Brahman mentioned earlier, namely, the matrix of existence, the all-holding bond of unity and omnipotent power. But she manifested in full only the gentle aspect of the redeeming power and universal love of divine motherhood, for that is the need of the age.

The birth of the Holy Mother was not accidental. It was in response to the need of the age and the fulfilment of the Divine Mother's promise given to the gods in the *Caṇḍī*: 'Thus whenever obstacles (to Dharma) caused by demons occur, I shall incarnate myself and destroy the foes.'<sup>13</sup> In the present age several obstacles to Dharma have arisen the most serious of which are materialism, immorality and disharmony. Sri Sarada Devi was born to show that these obstacles could be removed without the destruction of life, simply by intensifying the current of virtue in the world. There is only one real force operating in the universe and it is the power of goodness, knowledge, *vidyā*. Evil, sin, suffering, *māyā*, *avidyā*—all these are illusions caused by the inability of the soul to open itself fully to the universal goodness of Existence,<sup>14</sup> to the power of *vidyā*, to listen to and follow the eternal voice of the Mother, the *vāk*. The Divine Mother is the source of all *vidyā*.<sup>15</sup> The

11. शिवः शक्त्या युक्तो यदि भवति शक्तं प्रभवितुम् ।  
न चेदेवं देवो न खलु कुशलः स्पन्दितुमपि ॥

Ananda-Lahari, 1

12. *The Gospel*, p. 64.

13. इत्थं यदा यदा बाधा दानवोत्था भविष्यति ।  
तदा तदाऽवतीर्याहं करिष्याम्यग्निसंक्षयम् ॥

*Devī-māhātmya* 11.54,55.

14. Note that both existence and goodness are denoted by the same word *sat* in Indian thought.

15. Cl. विद्याः समस्तास्तव देवि भेदाः

*Devī-māhātmya* 11.6.

mission of Sri Sarada Devi was to demonstrate how through illumined motherhood the power of *vidyā* could be intensified and channelled to solve the problems of individual and collective life. She just lived in silence radiating the pure rays of *vidyā*, absorbing all evil into her ever-expanding motherhood.

There is only one way to remove evil from the world and establish harmony and peace. It is to reorganize human society around the Mother ideal, to open oneself more and more to the Mother power, and to convert every action and thought into a worship of the Divine Mother. That is why Swami Vivekananda said, 'At the present time God should be worshipped as Mother, the Infinite Energy... The new cycle must see the masses living Vedanta, and this will have to come through women.'<sup>16</sup>

### *Cit as the Guru*

We have seen that the cause of suffering and evil is the inability of the soul to open itself to the universal goodness of Existence. The source of man's troubles lies not in the external world but in his soul. Therefore investigation into the nature of the soul was taken up in India even at a very early period in its history. Through deep contemplation the sages of the Upaniṣads made two important discoveries. One is that the real nature of the soul is pure, contentless *cit* or consciousness which is self-luminous, self-revealing and is independent of the body and the mind. Secondly, this individual consciousness is only a part of the infinite consciousness of Brahman (*prajñānam brahma*).

Though *cit* or consciousness is infinite and all-pervading, it manifests itself in different ways in different beings. In human beings it expresses itself in three ways: as knowledge, as will, as the self.

It is through knowledge that we become aware of existence. This awareness of existence is the distinctive characteristic of life. A stone exists, but is not aware of that fact. The *cit* aspect of Brahman is there even in the stone, but it is not manifested as knowledge. It is because of the presence of *cit* in it that it is able to impinge upon our minds. This mode of *cit* is called *prakāśa*, luminosity. Knowledge always means knowledge of something, that is, of existence. This revealing aspect of *cit* is called *vimarśa*. (In the Bengal Vaiṣṇava school it is known as *samvit*.) *Vimarśa* is of two kinds: lower (*apara*) and higher (*para*). Lower knowledge reveals Existence as discontinuity, multiplicity and variety. Higher knowledge reveals Existence as infinite, unbroken, non-dual *sat*.

This *vimarśa śakti* or power of revelation is potentially present in the human soul, but manifests itself in different degrees according to the stages of evolution at which people are. In ordinary people it remains in a veiled, dormant or contracted state, and needs a quickening impulse to manifest itself. This impulse comes from the Guru. Thus the Guru is the embodiment of the *vimarśa śakti* of *cit*. That is why Sri Ramakrishna used to say that Saccidānanda alone is the Guru.

However, the manifestation of the Guru power varies from person to person. An ordinary secular teacher only enables a person to get lower knowledge, whereas the spiritual teacher awakens the soul and imparts supreme knowledge. Then there are the great teachers of mankind called *yugācāryas* who appear in different epochs of history like the Vedic sages, Lao Tzu, Moses, Śaṅkarācārya and others. The function of the epochal Teacher is to prepare the ground for the mission of the Avatār of the Age, give his message a suitable philosophical foundation, and adapt it to the prevalent social conditions.

In the present age this role of the

<sup>16</sup> *The Complete Works* (1972) vol. 7, p. 95.

epochal Teacher devolved on Swami Vivekananda. The *vimarśa śakti* or Guru power of this age found its embodiment in Swamiji. In him the *cit* aspect of Brahman found its most dynamic and effective expression. He was born to teach mankind the Dharma of the present age. During the ten years of preaching that he did, he awakened, inspired, taught and guided thousands of people, and his voice is still ringing in the souls of countless people. He himself said that he had given the world enough food for thought to last a thousand years, and 'I shall not cease to work. I shall inspire men everywhere, until the world shall know that it is one with God.'

The second manifestation of the *cit* aspect of Brahman is the will. In Indian thought will is known as *ic'hā*, *dhṛti* or *kratu*, but it is seldom distinguished from consciousness. For will is only the dynamic aspect of the self, the focussing of consciousness. 'That which seems to be the will is the Atman behind; it is really free', says Swami Vivekananda.<sup>17</sup> Will is commonly confused with a strong desire, feeling or instinct. The former is a function of the Atman while latter belongs to its outer sheaths. But since the will in most people is enslaved by lower desires and instincts, it is difficult to distinguish between them. To understand what true will is we must go deep into the soul and attain true spiritual experience which alone can free the will. The marks of a free will are detachment, fearlessness and strength.

The more spiritual is a person, the greater is his will-power. In world teachers like Swami Vivekananda will-power finds its highest and widest expression. Swamiji not only preached, but also gave a new turn to the course of history by the exercise of his gigantic will. Knowledge, for Swamiji, is not a passive experience but a dynamic force expressing itself as freedom,

fearlessness and strength. This is the central point of his message.

The third manifestation of *cit* is self-awareness. The self is the unifying centre which holds together the different parts of the personality like the body, the mind, the senses, the will, emotions etc. In ordinary people the self identifies itself with the ego, the body and the mind. Spiritually awakened persons realize it as the Atman. But in a world teacher the self identifies itself with the whole humanity. Swami Vivekananda demonstrated this truth through his life. Girish Chandra Ghosh once said that Mahāmāyā could not catch two people in Her net of delusion. One was Nag Mahashay and the other was Swamiji. The ego of the former was so small that it escaped through the meshes, whereas the ego of the latter was so big that it would not go into the net. The 'I' of Swamiji was not limited to his body and mind. It was one with the *paramāhamta* of the Divine. The motive force for his thoughts, desires and actions came not from the body-bound ego, but from the World Soul. His voice was the echo of the universal Self. He was not a mere Bodhisattva striving to liberate others out of compassion, but a perfected Buddha working as the divine instrument for *sarva-mukti*, universal redemption, which he believed was a fundamental spiritual law and the inevitable destiny of humankind.

#### *Ananda as the Avatār*

We have discussed two aspects of Brahman: *sat*, manifesting itself as existence, unity and power; and *cit*, manifesting itself as knowledge, will and the self. Existence and knowledge are not an end in themselves; they have some purpose, goal, meaning. They alone do not make life complete, full, *pūrṇa*. This final complement and ultimate significance of life and

<sup>17</sup> *ibid*, p. 77.

Reality is *ānanda*, bliss. *Sat* and *cit* become meaningful only in so far as they evoke the response of *ānanda* in us. As the *Taittirīya-Upaniṣad* states, *ānanda* is the very essence of Reality, without which life would be impossible.<sup>18</sup> Hence the same Upaniṣad speaks of *ānanda* as the ultimate principle from which all beings originate, by which they live and into which they return.<sup>19</sup>

Like *sat* and *cit*, *ānanda* too is an all-pervading principle but has different degrees of manifestation. In man the purest form of joy dwells in his Atman. That is why everyone regards his own self as the dearest thing and loves everybody else for its sake, as the sage Yājñavalkya observes in the *Brhadāraṇyaka-Upaniṣad*.<sup>20</sup> But in the state of bondage the soul of man is a limited entity, and so the inner bliss available to him is also limited. 'Real bliss is not in the limited, but in the Infinite', declares another sage in the *Chāndogya-Upaniṣad*. It is the hunger for boundless bliss that impels the soul to realize God.

God in his impersonal nature as the Absolute is beyond the grasp of the ordinary mind. It can form a conception of Him only as a Person with divine attributes—the Bhagavān—who dwells in the souls of all beings as the Supreme Self. But even this aspect of the Divine is beyond the realization of most of the people. So the Bhagavān descends to the world as the Avatār assuming a human form, and lives among ordinary people revealing His divine *ānanda* and perfection through His humanity. The Avatār is thus the special manifestation of the *ānanda* aspect of Brahman. As Sri Ramakrishna says, though milk is derived from the elements present in all parts of the cow, it is available in all its purity, sweetness and

richness only in the udder. Similarly, the Avatār is the only source where divine bliss is readily available to us.

However the Avatār is not a mere passive channel of bliss; he enjoys bliss himself. God is not only of the nature of bliss (*ānandamaya*) but also the enjoyer of bliss (*ānandabhuk*), as the *Māṇḍūkya-Upaniṣad* points out.<sup>21</sup> He also imparts bliss to others and teaches them how to seek and enjoy divine bliss. This power of enjoying and imparting bliss is known as *hlādinī-śakti* in Vaiṣṇava scriptures. It is by the exercise of this power that the Avatār performs his *līlā*, sport, on earth. He lives like an ordinary man, shares the joys and sorrows of other people and actively participates in the drama of life, and yet he enjoys unalloyed bliss and serves as a source of bliss to others. He may even transfer the miseries of others to his person without in any way affecting his blissful nature.

Thus the primary purpose of God's incarnation is to provide a *līlā-vigraha*, image of divine bliss, to serve as a universal focus of man's craving for joy. Since the external conditions of life constantly change, the images of former ages become inadequate to hold the attention, and draw out the faith, of people in later ages. Hence the Lord incarnates Himself again and again to wean people away from their worldly pursuits and show them the right path to the attainment of supreme bliss and fulfilment. In the present age the Lord incarnated Himself as Sri Ramakrishna for the welfare of the whole world.

It was earlier mentioned that the unity of mankind at the level of *sat* is achieved by the Divine Mother through her *samdhinī* power, and that this unity of the *cit* level is effected by the epochal Guru through the *vimarśa* or *samvit* power. The Avatār unites all mankind at the level of *ānanda*

18. रसो वै म. । . . को ह्येवान्यात् क. प्राण्यात् ।

*Taittirīya-Upaniṣad* 2.7.1.

19. *ibid.*, 3.6.1.

20. *Brhadāraṇyaka-Upaniṣad* 2.4.5 and 4.5.6

21. *Māṇḍūkya-Upaniṣad* 5.

through his *hlādinī* power. God's love thus manifests itself in three different ways. A person may open himself to any of these aspects and attain the highest goal of life. But the ideal of the present age is to attune oneself to all the three aspects and powers of God. This is the special feature of the avatarhood of Sri Ramakrishna.

Sri Ramakrishna had a three-fold mission on earth. One was to invoke and mobilize Mother Power for the establishment of *dharma* and harmony in the world. This he has done through the Holy Mother Sri Sarada Devi. The second mission was to release the Guru Power in order to teach mankind the way to meet the challenges of

science and technology and social changes. This he has accomplished through Swami Vivekananda. The third mission was to provide a new image of divine *ānanda* and a new ideal of life harmonizing all the earlier ideals. This he fulfilled through his own life and teachings.

The personalities of Sri Sarada Devi, Swami Vivekananda and Sri Ramakrishna represent the special manifestations of the *sat*, *cit* and *ānanda* aspects of Brahman respectively. They are the embodiments of the divine powers of these three aspects working for the welfare of all humankind in the present age. Through them the one supreme Reality shines upon the world in three glorious ways.

## SANNYASA AND BRAHMACHARYA\*

SWAMI SUBODHANANDA (KHOKA MAHARAJ)

Sannyāsa is the renunciation of all selfish motives and desires. Before I explain what Sannyāsa is, I should speak to you about Brahmacharya; for unless the latter is realized, no Sannyāsa or renunciation is possible. The observance of Brahmacharya requires strict regulation of one's diet, habits and thoughts. Of all the injunctions prescribed for this stage, the greatest stress is laid by the *śāstras* upon the complete mastery of the sexual instinct. Nothing should be sensed or done by the aspirant which might directly or otherwise tend to arouse the animal in him or her. In this way one is directed to bring one's mind under full control. He who is not a slave to his senses and mind, but on the contrary has made them his slaves, is a true Brahmachārīn. All the religions of the world preach this Brahmacharya and Sannyāsa, both of which have one and the same end in view, namely to lift the mind up from all sensual concerns towards

God. When the mind reaches God it enjoys divine bliss.

The lifting up of the mind can be brought about by worshipping God either with form or without form. Those who are devoted to God with form know Him as their nearest and dearest, they enjoy His company all the moments of their lives. They play with Him, they live and move in Him. Those who worship the formless God also enjoy Him intensely, realizing Him as the all-pervading one; and thus they also live and move in Him. The enjoyments of both these devotees are same in their intensity, inasmuch as both are supersensuous.

Unless a man rises above the allurements

\* A lecture delivered at the 'Young Men's Hindu Association', Madras, in 1897 by Swami Subodhananda, a direct disciple of Sri Ramakrishna, which first appeared in *Prabuddha Bharata* November, 1898 (vol. 3, No. 4).



of his senses he can never be a devotee. So a devotee's mind is far away from all worldly desires. He does not much care for his family, friends or relatives; no duties bind him to any one of them, for his mind entirely rests in and with God every moment of his life. And when he looks towards the world anytime he does not see the world of men, but rather the world of gods, for all men, women, animals, houses, trees, sky and earth, all appear to him to be filled with divinity. Let me illustrate this by narrating to you the life of a saint, for the lives of such persons are the living and concrete examples of what I have just now said. The study of such lives are more beneficial to us than the knowledge of the abstract truths themselves; for the former clearly shows to us the path which we should follow in the journey of our life. 'What a great man traced out is the true path.'<sup>1</sup> They, as Longfellow says, 'Leave footprints on the sands of time.'

Foot prints that perhaps another  
Sailing o'er life's solemn main.  
A forlorn and shipwrecked brother,  
Seeing, shall take heart again.

When the great saint and prophet Śrī Caitanya of Nadia was travelling in Deccan he became the guest of a pious and wealthy Maratha Brahmin. This Brahmin had an only child named Gopal Bhatta whom he loved very fondly. As he was a very pious man he spent most of his time in worshipping his Iṣṭa and chanting the praises of God. He never turned out any guest from his doors and his chief pleasure lay in receiving Sādhus and Sannyāsins as his guests, feeding them sumptuously, supplying them with clothes and hearing from them instructive lectures to edify himself. But his boy Gopal had a higher motive. He was not satisfied only to hear lectures from Sādhus

or worship the *image* of God; he wanted to see the *real* God. With this end in view he always wanted to go to a solitary place and there devote his whole time in communion with his beloved. So when, Śrī Caitanya was his father's guest the boy was struck with the intense devotion of the Prophet, whose eyes were like two streams flowing in tears of love. He wished to be like him, to live alone and travel from place to place as a Sannyāsin or a Sādhu, supporting himself by begging alms. Śrī Caitanya too seeing the goodness, purity, simplicity and devotion of the boy was very much attracted to him, so much so, that he praised the child before his father saying, 'This your boy will be a great devotee hereafter.' When Śrī Caitanya went away, the boy's heart followed him; but he could not make out how to carry his desire into action, as his father's fondness towards him proved a great barrier. However, one day he told his father about his intention and the father fearing lest his child should leave him secretly and betake himself to a foreign land, kept a constant watch over him, without his knowledge. But where there is a will there is a way. One midnight when all were asleep, when even the guards that were especially employed to keep strict watch over him were in deep slumber, Gopal left his home and avoiding the highway took the forest path to evade detection. He had nothing with him besides the cloth which he had on. After travelling a whole day he was overpowered with hunger and, being still a boy, began to weep and pray to his God. A little while after, he saw an old man coming towards him, who asked why he was weeping: upon which the boy said that he was hungry and the old man immediately gave him some food to eat, caressed him and told him that as his way also lay through the forest, he would be his fellow traveller and that the forest was a very big one and it would take them several days to cross it. The boy was very grateful at this and what

1. महाजनो येन गतः स पन्थाः ।

was more, whenever he felt hungry he was sure to find some good food and sweet words from the old man. One day he asked the old man who he was and why was he taking so much care of him. The old man at once gave out that he was the very same individual whom he had been seeking after. At this the boy replied : 'He whom I seek is not old like yourself but very young and beautiful with a flute in his hand and a peacock's feather on his head. How can I believe that you are He, my own dear beloved Śrī Kṛṣṇa ?' To his utter surprise and transport, the old man was at once transformed into the most lovely youth in the world and stood smiling before him as Śrī Kṛṣṇa himself. Who can describe the ecstasy which Gopal was in at the time ? After a while when his transport had abated a little, Śrī Kṛṣṇa pointed out to him a very easy way out of the jungle and vanished on the spot promising to meet him again in Śrī Vṛndāvan, filling the boy's mind with love and joy. It is needless to mention that a few months after Gopal reached Śrī Vṛndāvan and there spent his whole life in ecstatic communion with his beloved Śrī Kṛṣṇa.

Now after studying the life of Gopal Bhatta we can clearly see that he became a man-god only because he had a strong faith and an insuperable determination in him. Simple faith and strong will are the two things necessary for the making of a true man. Our Master used to say that if we wanted to pass a thread through the eye of a needle all the scattered fibres of the thread should be brought to point and then alone we could make it go through the needle, otherwise if the fibres were allowed to point to all directions they would prevent the thread from passing through the eye ; similarly if we wanted to lift our mind up towards God, we must have to bring it back from all external things and concentrate it at one point. But how to concentrate the scattered mind ? the mind which has been

distributed to wife and children, to the attainment of name and fame and to the pursuit of all sorts of sensual pleasures ? This can be effected by faith in God or in one's own Guru.

Gopal Bhatta had great faith in Śrī Kṛṣṇa and therefore it was easy for him to direct his love entirely to the most loving, kind, and beautiful shepherd boy of Śrī Vṛndāvan; even hunger and privation could not estrange his mind from the lotus feet of his Beloved. But such a faith is not ordinarily met with. Therefore for the generality of mankind faith in one's own Guru is necessary. If a man loves his Guru with his whole heart, obeys what the latter says, his mind being devoted to him, will naturally shun other attractions and thus get concentrated. This faith towards one's own Guru grows gradually in strength and so it is not advisable to lay it open to vulgar criticism when it is just sprouted ; for so long as the plant has not grown up sufficiently it should be hedged in to be protected from being destroyed by the cattle. When there is a little quantity of water in a pool we should not disturb it violently, for then it will get muddy and be unfit for drinking, and we will have to return home more thirsty than before. This our Master taught us. Therefore it is my earnest prayer to you all never to allow any indiscriminate questioning of your faith from outside, nor should you yourselves lay it bare to vulgar criticism. Faith is one's own ; no one has any right to call it into question. Every man in this world has some faith or other, which to others may appear false. Let me assure you that no sincere faith can be productive of anything but what is really good. Let me repeat therefore, do not let yours or any other's faith be made a butt of unsympathetic and disrespectful questions ; for doubt is death. The proverb says that faith is very near to Śrī Kṛṣṇa. Scepticism is far away from him. Adorn your mind with the good quality of humility, for unless you be meek and hum-

ble you can learn nothing. Our Master says that as rain water does not stand upon a high ground but always seeks the lower level, similarly those who are puffed up with vanity cannot retain any faith in them ; for faith always seeks the hearts of the humble and the meek.

So long there must be quarrel between different individuals and sects as long as they do not rise up to realize the highest truth. When truth shines, the darkness of ignorance and its crew of narrowness, bigotry and fanaticism which deluge the earth with murder and bloodshed, shall all vanish. 'My God is true God, your God is false', is the talk of men groping in the darkness of ignorance. Once the late Mr. Keshab-chandra Sen, the leader of the Brahma Samaj asked our Master : 'Since there is only one God how is it that there are so many sects quarrelling with one another?' To which the Bhagavan replied : 'You see, my dear boy, people always quarrel over their lands, properties and sundry other things of the world, saying, "This land is mine, and that is thine" and, in this way divide this earth in various ways by drawing lines of demarcation to distinguish their respective properties ; but no one ever quarrels about the open space that is above the earth, for that belongs to none, as there can be drawn no lines on it to mark out one's property from that of another ; similarly when the mind rises above all wordly concerns he can have no occasion for quarrel, for then he reaches a certain point which is the common goal of all.' When a man realizes God he cannot quarrel, but when he is below the right mark, that is, when he is distant from God, is more or less given to quarrelling. Try to rise up to that height without quarrelling, although you may have many occasions for it, and thus at last end all these disagreements by realizing universal harmony and agreement which are only to be found in God, who is both within and without you. Let us hear what a great Bengali devotee

of yore named Śrī Rāmprasād had ever been singing sweetly to all people. This great devotee never sat down to compose his songs, but when the feeling came he sang extempore most exquisitely beautiful songs, redolent with the love celestial. These immortal songs are believed by many to have come from the Eternal Mother Herself, who sat enthroned in the bosom of Her child Śrī Rāmprasād and prompted him to sing. He sings : 'Worship the Mother, O my mind, in whatever way you like, never forgetting to remember the *mantra* which your spiritual father has given to you ; know that you prostrate yourself before the holy Mother when you stretch yourself to rest ; know yourself to be in deep meditation when you sleep ; know that you offer oblation to the holy fire when you eat. Know that every sound you hear is the holy *mantra* of the Mother, for all the fifty letters of the alphabet are Her different names Śrī Rāmprasad announces to all with great joy that the Mother Divine is in every being ; and so, O my mind, when you walk in the streets know for certain that you are simply going round that Divine Mother.' Here the song ends. Can such a man have any quarrel with any of his fellow brothers ? Such a man is a true Sannyāsin.

Once upon a time a dirty looking man entered the garden premises of the late Rani Rashmani at Dakshineswar, a village north of Calcutta. This spacious garden contains a very beautiful temple of Kālī which covers a large area. The temple servants, seeing the dirty and unclean man intruding into and polluting the temple-grounds, gathered together to turn him out after giving him a good thrashing. But our Master, who lived in that garden, seeing the man, at once found him out to be a great Yogin, a real Sannyāsin, and so he told the men not to ill treat him. They obeyed him, but looking at the dirtiness of his exterior, they did not allow him to go into the temple. After a while, standing in front the temple,

the dirty Sadhu began to chant praises of the Divine Mother so sweetly that he drew tears from the eyes of all those who a few minutes ago wanted to beat him. Then, seeing a dog eating some remnants of food that had been cast away, he went up to the dog, caressed him and spoke to him thus : 'Why friend are you eating all alone? Won't you share your dish with me?', and began to eat with the dog. As he was going away from the garden a good man went up to him and asked him with joined palms, 'O master, kindly instruct me in the mystery of true knowledge.' To which the Sadhu replied : 'My boy, when you will not find any difference between the holy water of the Ganges and the filthy water of a sewer, then alone shall you be able to comprehend what true knowledge is.' A true Sannyāsin looks upon a saint and a sinner in the same light, for he finds the same God in both of them, only in different garbs. Such a one

is called a perfect man. The characteristics of a perfect man are thus summed up by Bhagavān Śaṅkarācārya : 'The perfect man has sometimes a cloth on and sometimes none ; sometimes he covers his nakedness with the bark of a tree, sometimes with the skin of an animal, sometimes he dresses himself purely with the garment of knowledge. He sometimes seems to be a mad man, sometimes a child, sometimes a dirty being, even like a *pīśūna*. Thus he walks abroad in the world at large, free as the morning air and fresh as the dew drops ; and proclaims peace and joy to all.'<sup>2</sup>

2. दिगम्बरो वापि च साम्बरो वा,  
त्वगम्बरो वापि चिदम्बरस्थः ।  
उन्मत्तवद्वापि च बालवद्वा,  
पिशाचवद्वापि चरत्यवन्याम् ॥

*I tvekaūdāmanī, 540*

## YOGA AND SUPERSENSUOUS EXPERIENCE\*

SWAMI YATISWARANANDA

In this strange period we are passing through, more and more people all over the world are showing increasing interest in the occult. Men and women frequent miracle workers and astrologers, hunt for magic charms and other objects supposed to possess healing vibrations, practise crystal-gazing and thought-reading, and talk of auras, the coloured or white light which seems discern surrounding the body. 'Can you see my aura?' they plead. 'What colour is it? Tell me, is it a bright one? What does it mean?' Many of these restless egoists are trying to get in touch with disembodied spirits through mediums or other adepts who for large sums of money offer to conduct guided tours to unearthly planes of existence. There are others who investigate mesmer-

ism, hypnotism, clairaudience, clairvoyance, telepathy and every kind of supersensory phenomenon which may lead them into dangerous waters.

These souls are in bondage, usually self-seeking, ignorant of the true Self which can be realized only through spiritual disciplines. These over-curious and credulous people who give all their time and energy to the investigation of psychic phenomena have no enthusiasm left over for meditation and the development of higher spiritual consciousness which frees the soul from all delusion, sorrow and fear.

On the other hand, the sceptic and the

\* A talk given at the Vedanta Society of Philadelphia, U.S.A., in May, 1948.

rationalist condemn all supersensuous experience. How far should so-called supernatural experiences be condemned? In the past all scientists had been sceptics. It was customary for those whom Swami Vivekananda called 'surface scientists' to ignore all supersensuous experience, branding them superstitious frauds. Further investigation however by such inspired physicists as Eddington and Sir James Jeans demonstrated that there is indeed an extra-physical factor in all matter as well as in human personality, that cannot be weighed or measured. The experiments of J. B. Rhine and other scientists of his type have established the truth of extra-sensory perception. This supports the most basic of all religious doctrines, namely, that man has a spiritual nature within the reach of his mind. What these scientists have been trying to prove on an experimental basis has been intuitively perceived through the ages by illumined souls of all countries, ages and religions.

Teachers of Vedanta went further when they declared from their own intuitive experience that what we call the individual soul is a part of the cosmic Spirit. *Īśvara*, Allah, Jehovah, God— call it what you will— is not an extracosmic Being beyond the clouds but is immanent in all life and also transcendent beyond all limitation. In the course of his wandering in the Himalayas Swami Vivekananda had a remarkable experience of the oneness of microcosm and macrocosm, about which he wrote in his diary : 'The microcosm and the macrocosm are built on the same plan. Just as the individual soul is encased in the living body so is the Universal Soul encased in the living Prakṛti— the objective universe.<sup>1</sup> On another occasion Swamiji said : 'Each man

is only a conduit for the infinite ocean of knowledge and power that lies behind mankind.'

Teachers of Vedanta explain by analogy with the help of various illustrations the relation of the individual to the Universal, although the final proof lies in direct spiritual experience. Each soul is like a wave and is only a part of the ocean of Infinity ; or the soul is like the space confined in a single room which is only part of the space within a house, which in turn is part of all surrounding space ; or the soul is like a man's energy derived from the sun as part of the cosmic energy by which we are all vitalized ; or the soul is like a single ray of light coming through a crack in a shutter which is part of the surrounding light which floods the whole universe. There is a direct and intimate relationship between the individual part and the cosmic whole, and it is the awareness of that relationship which is the foundation of a spiritual life. These analogies hold good not only for the physical level of the relationship between microcosm and macrocosm, but also for mental and spiritual levels ; for just as an individual's physical energy is like a minute whirlpool in the ocean of matter, so also his subtle or mental body is part of a vast cosmic mind, and the individual spirit is part of the infinite Supreme Spirit.

There are three dimensions of human personality : first, the physical body with its mind and senses which is a part of the cosmic body of matter ; second, the subtle or mental body which is a part of the vast cosmic mind whose nature is truly apprehended only by the deeper insight of the seer who gets glimpses of life on another plane. Thirdly, there is the individual human soul which we know to be an infinitesimal portion of the all-pervading infinite Supreme Spirit. Though the body and mind are limited, the soul is capable of infinite expansion and can become one with the universal Spirit.

1. Cf. *The Life of Swami Vivekananda* by His Eastern and Western Disciples, Fifth revised Edition (Calcutta : Advaita Ashrama, 1979) vol. 1, p. 250.

There are supersensuous experiences on the physical plane, on the subtle-mental plane and also on the spiritual plane. Patañjali, the great seer of ancient India, made a special study of different types of supersensuous experiences. He tells us how, with the constant practice of concentration and meditation, extra-sensory powers are unfolded and higher forms and levels of existence beyond the reach of bodily senses are perceived. But are such experiences real?

We all know that the human mind in a morbid state can produce all sorts of fantasies that appear so real that people act upon them. There is the story of the man brought to court on a charge of drunkenness. 'What gave you the impression that the prisoner was the worse for drink?', asked the judge. The policeman replied 'Well, sir, he was engaged in a heated argument with a taxi driver.' 'But that doesn't prove anything.' 'But, sir, there was no taxi driver at all.' Or a man sees in the dark a rope on the road and takes it for a poisonous snake. Immediately all the symptoms of terror arise in him. As long as he mistakes the harmless rope for a deadly serpent the experience is 'real' enough, but further investigation dissipates the misery of fear. Or we see a mirage of water in the desert and hasten to drink only to discover that the water is there only as a reflection, a trick of light. We can all remember acting upon such illusions only to find our bonds tightened when we long for the liberating truth.

These are supersensuous experiences on the physical plane, but we know of such experiences on the spiritual plane as well. Patañjali speaks of supersensory experiences that deal with objects existing independently but on a finer plane. In the book *Raja Yoga* Swami Vivekananda describes various manifestations of Prāṇa or cosmic energy. At the physical level it stems from the sun and is manifested in our food and in the ordinary physical activities of our bodies

like eating, breathing and the beating of the heart. At the mental level Prāṇa is manifested in thinking, feeling and imagination and also in the psychic powers of hypnotism, clairvoyance and psychic phenomena. Through special forms of concentration the yogi can attain all sorts of extraordinary powers that seem to defy physical laws. By concentrating the mind on his own inner tendencies the yogi comes to know about his past life in earlier incarnations. By concentrating on another person's mind he can read his thoughts. He can even make his own body invisible at will. Once a young man, who had been instructed by the same illumined woman who initiated Sri Ramakrishna into yogic mysteries, acquired the power of becoming invisible and could move anywhere unnoticed. But his heart was not pure and he misused his power to satisfy his lower nature. As a result he soon fell from the spiritual heights which he had attained. Swami Brahmananda used to say: 'It is much easier to attain psychic powers than purity of heart.' It is only through purity of heart that we can realize the highest Truth. By practising concentration on the sun the yogi comes to have knowledge of the various spheres illumined by the sun. This is no ordinary concentration but a kind of inner absorption that results in extraordinary powers of intuition.

Most yogis set aside the use of such powers if they come to possess them, and by constant practice of meditation on spiritual themes, and by developing purity and control of vital energy, in due course attain the highest Truth of infinite consciousness. But they naturally have a general intuitional insight into the nature of physical and subtle planes of existence. Such a seer has, as it were, a large revolving telescope in contrast to the small fixed binoculars in a sight-seer's hand.

It is a great temptation to direct this intuitional faculty toward the mind and senses in order to acquire supersensuous powers, to

learn about remote events of the past, present or future, to hear, touch, see, supernatural objects of sense. Spiritual life is full of such pitfalls. Sri Ramakrishna always warned his disciples to beware of any such powers that might come to them as a result of concentration. 'Do not waste your energy', he told them. 'He who pays heed to occult powers becomes unable to live in God.'

Once the Master called the greatest of his young disciples, Narendra who later became Swami Vivekananda, and said: 'Through the practice of severe spiritual disciplines I have acquired supernatural powers ... I am thinking of transmitting them to you. ... If I impart these powers to you, you can use them whenever necessary. What do you say?'

'Will these powers help me to realize God?', asked Narendra.

'No, they will not help you in that but they will be very useful to you when, after realizing God, you are engaged in doing His work.'

'I do not want them. Let me first realize God, maybe then I shall know whether I should accept these powers or not. If I accept them now I may forget my spiritual ideal; in making use of them for some selfish purpose I may come to grief.'

Up to this point I have been referring only to those forms of supersensuous experience, including all that is commonly relegated to the occult, which are obstacles on the path leading to liberation. Now the question arises: Should the supersensuous spiritual experiences of the mystics also be regarded as hindrances? The answer is an emphatic NO. Instead of being obstacles, the visions of true devotees are like milestones on the way to realization of Unity with Brahman.

Extremists of the Advaita school of Vedanta, bent on the realization of the non-dual Absolute, regard all spiritual visions as

unnecessary because these also belong to the phenomenal world. But the masters of the all-comprehensive system of Vedanta value those visions and experiences which render the spiritual aspirant purer and stronger, more and more established on the spiritual realm, and finally help him to attain the supreme and blissful experience of unity with the Supreme Spirit.

Śrī Kṛṣṇa acknowledges the validity of both the path of negation ('Not this, not this') of the Jñāni, and the positive way of Bhakta stressing devotion to the personal aspect of the immanent and transcendent Spirit. 'The task of those whose minds are set on the Unmanifest is more difficult; for the unmanifest Reality is hard to attain for those who have body consciousness.'<sup>3</sup> The path of the devotee who worships a personal God is easier for the beginner and never to be condemned. They consecrate all their actions to the immanent Deity in His universal form. They worship Him with single-minded devotion, dedicating all their actions to Him until through divine grace they, too, in due course become absorbed in the Godhead, liberated from the cycle of birth and death.

The central theme of the path of devotion as taught by all the great theistic religions and reflected in their scriptures is the redeeming, uplifting power of divine grace. Śrī Kṛṣṇa says, 'To those who are ever united to me and worship me with love I give that Yoga of wisdom by which they attain Me.'<sup>4</sup> The true devotee of God makes Him the central theme of his life, directing all his mind and heart and energies to Him alone. He constantly sings and prays and consecrates all his action to the Lord. As a result, all his desires for worldly enjoyment gradually leave him. And whatever is left in him is absorbed into one-pointed devotion.

2. *ibid.*, p. 99-100.

3. The *Bhagavad-Gītā*, 12.5.

4. *ibid.*, 10.10.

A disciple asked Sri Ramakrishna: 'When one sees God, does one see Him with these bodily eyes?' The Master replied: 'God cannot be seen with these physical eyes. In the course of spiritual discipline one gets a "love-body" endowed with "love-eyes", "love-ears" and so on. One sees God with those "love-eyes"'.<sup>5</sup> The yogi's supersensuous powers of hearing, touching, seeing, tasting and smelling become dangerous only if they are turned to subtle objects of sensuous enjoyment. But if instead they are directed to the plane of spiritual consciousness and love, they will lead him to higher spiritual experiences that altogether transform his whole life and consciousness and, by a kind of luminous radiation, all those who come into contact with him.

True mystics and wise men of all religions have never sought supernatural powers. The pure joy of the constant presence of God is all they ask for. All the great mystics have declared that this perception of divine consciousness cannot be attained through the senses or the human mind, nor can it be expressed in speech. They speak of a higher power of intuition which can be developed only after purity of mind is achieved. This is a new instrument of knowledge, to be forged through the intense, constant and single-minded practice of spiritual disciplines, and absolute purity of heart. This was what Christ meant when he said: 'Blessed are the Pure in Heart for they shall see God'. This is release from bondage. 'Bondage can fall off only through the mercy of God . . . and purity is the condition of His mercy. God reveals Himself to the pure heart, even in this life.'

The most important question for us is: how can this purity be attained? We recognize the necessity of pure food for the body free from impure and harmful ingredients, containing the proper vitamins and nourish-

ment. We are beginning to recognize also the necessity of nourishing the emotions of a growing child with thoughts of harmony and faith rather than with thoughts of fear, conflict, insecurity. In the same way we can provide food for the spirit through the reading of scriptures, practice of yoga disciplines, repetition of the divine name, devotion and service. Spiritual life is a steady process of purification, and we can never over-emphasize the need for it in bringing about illumination. Followers of Orphic Mysteries, Pythagoreans, Platonists, Buddhists, Sufis and Christian mystics are in accord with the teachers of the Upaniṣads when they declare, 'He who has not turned away from wickedness and sense pleasure, who is not tranquil and recollected can never attain the Self merely through knowledge'.<sup>6</sup>

There is no easy path, no clinging to a grace of God that involves merely effortless ceremonies, which can lead us to true spiritual illumination. Unless there is a hunger for God deep within our own souls, a hunger constantly renewed as our faith is renewed by love, we cannot make spiritual progress. We must use our God-given intelligence and pay the cost, and we must never expect to get true realization before we have striven to our utmost capacity.

We should not try to avoid intense and continuous struggle and effort in the name of worldly duty which, as Swami Vivekananda has pointed out, often becomes a form of compulsive neurosis. For very often duty is only another name for self-interest, or the sort of vanity that makes us very busy over our neighbour's life when we should be attending to our own. For the serene mind in harmony with the universe there is a timeliness in action which leads to better service in the end, to a truer conception of where duty lies, and to spiritual progress for oneself and others. We must have that hunger for the Truth which will make

5. *The Gospel of Sri Ramakrishna* (Madras Sri Ramakrishna Math, 1974) p. 42.

*Katha-Upaniṣad*, 2.24.



us impatient with half-truths or downright falseness of much worldly activity in the name of duty. Restless, aimless activity driven by worldly desires are a great obstacle in spiritual life.

Faithful practice of meditation helps us to conserve our energies and discover where the path lies. We must learn to go ever deeper into consciousness until the worldly ego is controlled and its energies channelled. Spiritual practice has both negative and positive aspects. It means breaking harmful habits antagonistic to spiritual life, and also forming good habits which train body, senses and mind in the direction of spiritual illumination. The Sufi mystic Bayazid, who lived about A.D. 800, said of spiritual practice :

For twelve years I was the blacksmith of my soul. I put it in the furnace of austerity and heated it red hot in the fire of combat ; I laid it on the anvil of self-examination and smote it with the hammer of reproach until I made of my soul a mirror. For five years I was forever polishing that mirror of myself with divers acts of worship and discipline in purity. Then for one year I gazed in contemplation

Here in symbolic language is described the spiritual struggle. We must learn how to keep clear the mirror of Self, constantly polishing it and keeping it free from the mist of rationalization and the stains of selfish ego.

In some form or other, all spiritual teachers speak of four stages on the spiritual path : purification, meditation, illumination, union with God. We must learn at what stage we are, and constantly struggle to move forward. Do the best you can, conscious always of the cosmic energy at work through you. It is necessary to keep alert against all inducement to sleep during periods of meditation, following the Hindu practice of yoga without undue asceticism. Hunger and sleeplessness are distracting to the mind. The goal requires moderation, self-control and physical and emotional balance. This is what Yoga teaches us.

Hindu teachers often refer to the two types of spiritual attitude illustrated by the kitten which is carried by its mother and the baby monkey which clings to its mother. Similarly, there are aspirants who depend solely upon the grace of God to lift them to a higher plane. The other type of aspirant puts forth his own efforts to transform his consciousness and realize God. A blending of both attitudes is needed. We must struggle constantly to perfect our divine eye, and at the same time learn to be receptive to the will of God as it becomes known to us, first through our teacher and then with the help of one's own purified mind. At this point we must consider the need for a balance of the active life and the life of contemplation. Here the Gita is a valuable guide, supplemented by the works of Swami Vivekananda.

The various Yogas are adapted to different temperaments and also to the needs of the different faculties of the same mind. Vedanta lays great stress on the path of Karma Yoga, teaching us how to perform every act of work in the world in a spirit of worship, free from attachment but with faithfulness and enthusiasm for what we are called upon to do. We offer the fruits of work to the Divine Spirit, regarding our activities as a channel through which flows the energy of God in all human life. If we follow the path of Bhakti Yoga we keep uppermost the thought of serving God in man, doing good to others without any hope of return, overcoming self-interest in the service of love. For many, love of the Personal Absolute is impossible except in terms of a divine Incarnation and love of our fellowmen for His sake. For those whose outlook is primarily intellectual, there is the Yoga of knowledge, the Jñāna Yoga, that aims at the realization of the impersonal Absolute beyond all relative phenomena. Then there is the path of Rāja Yoga which teaches purity, self-control and concentration by the exercise of will power.

The highest ideal of God-realization is to

become harmoniously balanced, using all four types of yoga giving more or less emphasis to each according to one's temperament and capacity for active or contemplative living. These are not watertight compartments; they flow into one another, and are interdependent as the various parts of the body are interdependent, each contributing to a balanced whole. To live effectively we need both theoretical and practical knowledge and activity. All the various disciplines are designed to establish harmony in the human personality. Thinking, feeling and willing, each has its part to play, but there must be a motivating force behind all.

The Supreme Spirit is at last revealed not by knowledge or discipline alone but by direct experience which is identical in all illumined souls who have been able to describe the revelation. This intuitive faculty leading to the experience of God lies dormant in everyone of us, waiting for that soul hunger which alone can overcome the inertia of the body and mind. A little girl once said to her mother on being put to bed: 'Wake me up, Mummy, if I feel hungry in the night.' The mother told her, 'Don't worry, my child. The hunger itself will

wake you up.' If we have God hunger, it will awaken us and impel us to practise the disciplines, and will ultimately set us free from the bondage of life and death.

Let us live the spiritual life with whole-souled devotion, never allowing our devotion to become sentimental or our knowledge dry. Let us guard ourselves against wasting our energies in useless activity and idle curiosity about psychic phenomena. Let us never yield to vanity, the form of impatience that leads us to think too soon that we are making progress; let us not attempt to heal others before we have quite healed ourselves. The object of all spiritual discipline is to keep alert that intuitive faculty which enables us to know our real nature and to fearlessly hold to what is real, no matter what the ways of the world are. When inner freedom through spiritual realization is attained, renunciation ceases to be painful. As the realm of the superconscious becomes familiar to us, we no longer seek to satisfy desires that are not in line with our spiritual evolution. The practice of the presence of God brings us greater joy and peace than anything the world can offer, as we learn to see the Supreme Spirit shining in all living beings.

## MAN MAGNIFIED

SWAMI SHRADDHANANDA

The history of mankind records numerous examples of magnified personalities—men who achieved great power, great command, and influence on others. That power sometimes had gone in the direction of disasters and evil. At other times, it had brought immeasurable happiness, peace, and strength to mankind. In our recent history we can take the case of Hitler. He was not an ordinary person, but quite

above the normal. He had developed such great power and influence that he made millions of people bow down to him. To many, this magnified personality seemed almost like a god. However, his patriotism unfortunately took a vicious direction. His power only brought untold sufferings not merely to the people of his own country, but also to those of many other countries. If that power had been directed to amity

and peace, history would have recorded a different story.

In the history of India there have been many examples of such magnified personalities who were forces of terrible evil. A typical example is *Rāvaṇa* of the *Rāmāyaṇa*. He was born in a very good family, but there was a strong evil tendency in his psyche. He acquired great power by performing austerities. Even though he could exercise tremendous self-control and was well versed in the scriptures, his power took a different direction—the path of greed, lust, and aggression. *Rāvaṇa* became a menace to the three worlds. The *Rāmāyaṇa* says that not merely human beings were afraid of him, but even the gods in heaven began to tremble. Eventually Lord Viṣṇu had to be born as *Rāma* to subdue this evil power *Rāvaṇa*. In the *Mahābhārata*, we have accounts of a number of tyrants, *Kamsa*, *Jarāsandha*, and *Śiśupāla*, who brought misery and oppression to society. So again Viṣṇu was born as *Kṛṣṇa* and destroyed them. These events happened, of course, in ancient times, but even in the later recorded history of India, we find examples of great magnified personalities who followed the path of evil—*Tamerlane* (*Timur*), *Chengiz Khan*, etc. They massacred thousands of people, devastated whole nations. In the judgement of history, the magnification of these tyrants was false.

On the contrary, there is the true magnification which takes the direction of human well-being. Man can grow in his moral and spiritual strength to such an extent that he becomes a tower of love and inspiration to humanity. *Jesus Christ*, *Buddha*, *Kṛṣṇa*, *Ashoka*, *Mahatma Gandhi*, *Abraham Lincoln*—these are truly magnified personalities. They belong to the whole world. Through the ages, mankind has looked upon these sublime characters with respect and have cherished their lives and achievements.

There is an inherent tendency, desire, in man to expand. This tendency for expansion is with us when we take form in the mother's womb as a tiny cell. We cannot stop at our limits. We want to grow and grow. Through days, weeks, and months, we grew in the darkness of the mother's womb. When we emerged into the world as a tiny baby—did we stop? No, because the inner voice of man says, 'I will grow, I will expand.' That is the inner voice of man. According to the *Upaniṣads*, it comes from God and represents the primordial divine Will to create, to multiply, to expand. In the beginning there was only a nondual Reality, God alone without a second. In unity there is no creation, neither expansion nor contraction. There is only pure existence, homogeneous and immutable. *Pūrṇam*, Fullness or Perfection, is its other name. In perfection there cannot be any desire or movement. When you are imperfect you want to fulfil, attain what you lack and you move about. It is because of our ignorance that we see this manifold world and seek an explanation of its creation. The *Upaniṣads* try to give a spiritual explanation. We find in the *Chāndogya-Upaniṣad* as well as in many other *Upaniṣads* that in the beginning there was only *Sat*, absolute Being, God. There was no second; only God was.<sup>1</sup> All the pieces of existence came from God. All aspects of existence—the existence of space, time, life, mind, matter, and so on—were involved in that infinite Existence, God, who is described as *Sat*. Then God said, 'I will be many. I will expand and spread out.'<sup>2</sup>

Man inherits this voice from God. According to the *Upaniṣads*, *Sat* projected

1. सदेव सोम्येदमग्र आसीदेकमेवाद्वितीयम् ।

*Chāndogya-Upaniṣad* 6.2.1

तदैक्षत बहुस्यां प्रजायेयेति ।

*ibid* 6.2.3

space (*ākāśa*) and then the other elements, and out of these basic materials created the entire cosmos. Another very important thing we find in this account of creation is that God was never alienated from His creation. After creating the many He entered into every fragment of the many.<sup>3</sup> Space was projected, but *Sat* was inside space. And this is true for all created objects. Without God space cannot exist neither can time nor matter, life, mind, exist without God. Everything that is projected is intimately associated with God, so much so that if anyone wants to discover Him at any time it will be possible to discover Him anywhere. In the Upaniṣads we read that 'the Supreme Self has penetrated into all these bodies up to the tips of nails, just as a razor lies in its case, or as fire lies in its source.'<sup>4</sup>

The individual Self, the Atman, the soul of man, is a part of the Paramātman, the Supreme Self. So man inherits that primordial Will of God to expand, develop, stretch forth. All the time man is singing within himself, 'I will expand, I cannot remain little. I want to expand, if possible in every direction.' But man is standing at a level of evolution where he has to choose the direction of his expansion. He cannot depend only on nature. We cannot depend on nature for the magnification and maintenance of the physical body. The body grows automatically with food, air, and water. The superior magnification of man, however, depends upon our honest will, and ardent endeavour. This effort if misdirected may make us a Hitler, or any

other maniac. The desire for expansion should follow in the footsteps of great men, moral heroes. They may not be religious people, in the limited sense; but they are men of truthfulness, honesty, compassion, dutifulness, unselfishness. We admire these great heroes. They are truly magnified personalities. By following in their footsteps and by leading a virtuous life of social service, man can rise above his normal limited personality which is satisfied with bodily comforts, intellectual attainments, and earthly possessions.

But that is not the limit of man's expansion. His self has still higher dimensions. And so he has the potentiality to expand on other more sublime levels. On the spiritual level man can become a god—pure, compassionate, holy. We adore all those who have attained this spiritual magnification—the sages, saints, and prophets. This spiritual magnification is what makes a man truly great. It is what makes human life divine and sacred.

Our scriptures say that man is not really small. That voice of God, 'I will expand', is literally true for man. There is a limit to physical or intellectual expansion; but there is no such limit in the range of moral excellence or spiritual perfection. When we come to spiritual life we find that there is absolutely no limit to expansion, because the spirit is divine and is not limited by time or space, or even by the laws of nature. This is real magnification. When man sets out to seek God, the Spirit, he finds that even this vast universe cannot bind him. He finds that there is in him a power, a faculty, by which he can rise above everything.

When we are in time and space we cannot rise above them. Expansion in time has to stop one day. Time will say, 'Now it is your ninetieth year. You cannot expand anymore. You cannot hope to live anymore. Look at yourself. All your

3. तत्सृष्टा तदेवानुप्राविशत् ।

*Taittirīya-Upaniṣad* 2.6.1.

4. आ नखाग्रेभ्यः यथा क्षुरः क्षुरधानेऽर्वाहितः स्यात्, विश्वम्भरो वा विश्वम्भरकुलाये ।

*Bṛhadāraṇyaka-Upaniṣad* 1.4.7 Also *Kauṣītaki-Upaniṣad* 4.20

hairs are gray. All your muscles are slack. You cannot digest anything. So stop your expansion. You are under my control. I am all-destroying time.' Neither can man expand in space at his will. He can travel all over the world, and in imagination and poetical fancy he can of course fly like a bird. Man's expansion in the knowledge of technology has taken him to the moon, and his instruments have gone to other distant planets; but that does not mean that he has conquered space without limit. As long as man is in time-space, and had identified himself with his body and mind, he is limited. But when he comes to spiritual life, when he finds that his true nature is essentially the spirit, his expansion beyond time and space really begins. This he learns through his own experience. Through his prayers and meditation he goes deeper and deeper into his spiritual reality. He feels that even in this limited body of flesh, blood, and bone, he is the spirit—the pure consciousness within. This consciousness is not in time and space. It is not born; it does not change; it does not die. The more he goes inward the more he discovers this truth about himself. Then he feels, as one of the Upaniṣadic seers describes and says with joy, 'I am in the sun, I am in the moon, I am in the clouds.' You can divide matter, you can divide time, but you cannot divide spirit. The spirit which is below here is in continuous existence with the spirit above. The basic reality of life is absolute Existence, Consciousness, and Bliss, *sat-cit-ānanda*. This Absolute is God. As Sat—He is immortal existence, as Cit—He is pure consciousness, and as Ānanda—He is perfect joy. Every man's soul is grounded in this divine Reality. When he gets glimpses of this true nature of his, his soul begins to identify itself more and more with the absolute Reality, and the more it does so the more it expands.

This has been described in the Upaniṣads through short sentences like

*aham brahmāsmi*, 'I am Brahman', and *tattvam-asi*, 'Thou art That'. Etymologically the word 'Brahman' means 'the great'. God is really the greatest, for He includes everything and pervades everything. And God, Brahman, is our Supreme Self. It is possible therefore for man to expand spiritually, till he becomes one with Brahman. When one identifies oneself with one's body one is a little man subject to death. Though this man may function in a little body, inside him there is the vastness of the spirit. When one identifies oneself with the spirit there is no more any fear of death, no more pettiness, selfishness, hate, greed, and other passions which keep man limited and little. His self expands and consumes all pettiness, limitations. There now remains only the spiritual reality shining in him. That shining reality which cannot really be described in words, the Upaniṣads call *pūrṇam*—Fullness, Perfection. When this happens, man comes to his ultimate magnification. The little man has become the Infinite. Of course, he continues to function even in this little body, continues to eat, run, think, talk, and live in a house; but he lives not *as* the body but *through* the body. His soul is one with the Infinite. His heart is filled with this knowledge of Truth: he knows that he is not little anymore. Through Self-knowledge he has gone beyond the limitations of all desires, imperfections and all fear. Such is the vast possibility of man's expansion.

Man's progress on the level of body, on the level of mind, and on the level of emotions, are necessary steps: but he must go forward. In the Old Testament the voice of God says, 'Though your sins be as scarlet, they shall be as white as snow.'<sup>5</sup> At a certain stage in his life a man may have committed many mistakes and people may call him a criminal, a sinner. But that

5. *Isaiah* 1:8

need not be the whole story of man. That same criminal or sinner may become transformed into a saint. Says the Lord in the Gita, 'Nothing indeed in this world purifies like the knowledge of Brahman. He who is perfected by yoga finds it in time within himself by himself.'<sup>6</sup> Blessed is that man who believes this, and works for this!

We may believe in something, but we are sometimes lazy and afraid. In spiritual life we have to call up great energy and build up a strong will. Wishing for something, and attaining that something, are different. In our spiritual life we have to be very careful and alert. We are alert regarding so many worldly things, but when we come to spiritual life we are not sufficiently mindful to make spirituality real in our life. Great teachers, saints, and sages of all times tell us that transcendence, expansion, is possible for everyone. It is the universal heritage of man. Man, the imperfect, the blemished, the confused, may

rise slowly to that level where he finds his true nature. In that knowledge there is no longer any doubt, confusion or fear. Such is the hope that spiritual life provides.

Lord Jesus Christ said that even if one's faith is as little as a grain of mustard seed, it can move a mountain. The same is true of love. Normally all of our love goes to this or that thing or person. Not much seems to be left for God. But we should not be discouraged. We should start with what little faith and love we have. Such is the power of love that the more we love, the more it grows. Faith and love build up a powerful will. So we need not be afraid that we do not have adequate faith, love, and will-power for the attainment of spiritual fulfilment. That is a wrong attitude. We can start our spiritual life at any point. Even a little faith, a little love is enough. If our aspiration is genuine, we shall expand in spiritual understanding and eventually find that, even though outwardly we are limited by the body and mind, in the depth of our personality there abides the great Truth—our true Self—the God in us—man truly magnified.

6. न हि ज्ञानेन सदृशं पवित्रमिह विद्यते ।

तत्स्वयं योगसंसिद्धः कालेनात्मनि विन्दति ॥

*Bhagavad-Gītā* 4 38.

## MYTH: ITS POWER AND GLORY

*(A Study of Jung's Contribution)*

SWAMI NITYABODHANANDA

Myth is that reality before which man stands and wonders, unable to grasp it by the intellect. (Plato)

The man of culture today surrounds the term 'myth' with a halo; he will not invest the same on terms like 'fable' or 'legend'. Thanks to the discoveries of psychoanalysis, he recognizes in myth a deeper reality than that of history. History is captive in the

hands of time. Again, what about the ancient ages of which there is no recorded history? The deeper layers of the psyche where unconscious perfections dwell participate in the collective unconscious common to all mankind. What is collective is naturally universal. Like a spiral whose beginning and end are unseen and lost in the eternal, the collective unconscious

stretches far into the past and into the future defying all time and history. Man stands wondering at his own 'depths', the depths of his unconscious which reveal two of its redeeming faces: universality and eternity.

The master-minds of the East and the West are unanimous in affirming that the modern man's anguish stems from the loss of contact with this eternal universal fount in himself. They agree to baptize this fount 'Myth'. This comes to saying that our unconscious has a mythical character.

To the question whether the play of Vṛndāvana of Śrī Kṛṣṇa actually took place or not, Swami Saradananda, the divinely gifted and inspired author of the book *Sri Ramakrishna, The Great Master*, answers as follows:

How can you either produce sure evidence that what we say from the Puranas did not take place? Until we get the proof that your history has undoubtedly opened the door to that very ancient age, we shall say that your doubt itself is unfounded. Moreover, even if you should ever produce such proof, no harm will touch our faith. It will not affect at all the eternal play in the eternal Vrindavan of the divine Lord<sup>1</sup>

If Swami Saradananda were living in our days, he would have replaced the word 'eternal' with the term 'mythical'.

The a-historical Kṛṣṇa transcends all history. So too does Christ: 'I am the alpha and the omega'.<sup>2</sup> They have no birth and no death. They are universal and hence are easily acceptable to those who are not born Hindus or Christians.

Though a-historical, they enter history. The myth of the churning of the ocean has it that Śiva drank the deadly poison to save the world from destruction. The Śiva-myth narrates that though an eternal monk, he married Pārvatī to provide a commanding

general for the army of the Devas. Śrī Kṛṣṇa's gift of love and protection to the Gopis and to all those who surrounded him was unconditional. The gods thus become archetypes<sup>3</sup> of Love and Redemption. When an archetype enters the collective unconscious of a people, history begins. Even as the mythical gods become archetypes and enter man's unconscious, man moves up. At this stage man needs a model to inspire him, a model that helps him to 'form' himself and to accomplish himself spiritually. He conceives the mythical god as a personal God, worthy of his adoration, also as the centre of a system. The passage from myth to archetype and then on to history and to a religious system is a natural result of the power of the mythical gods entering man's unconscious. The outcome of their entry is that man begins to thirst for participation in God's programme of Love. He integrates with the 'evidence' of the intemporal love of the gods that chooses to be temporal in history. What is temporality in philosophy is the moving point of love-grace in mythology, the love which is intemporal but which accepts to become temporal to make man conscious of his intemporality or eternity.

*Myth: three springs of spiritual inspiration*

The fabulous accounts of the efforts of divine Incarnations to save man from critical situations inflame our creative imagination (*bhāvanā*). If Bhakti is the mother and Bhakta the child, then Bhāvanā is the mother's lap into which the mother takes the child and fondles it.<sup>4</sup> Creative imagination makes twin brothers of mystical experience and aesthetic experience, aesthetic joy

3. Archetypes are primordial idea-forms bequeathed to man by divine intelligence. We shall speak of them in detail later on in this essay.

4. भवद् भावना

पर्यङ्के विनिवेश्य भक्तिजननी भक्तार्मेकं रक्षति

*Śivānandalahari*, verse 62.

1. *Sri Ramakrishna, The Great Master* (Madras: Sri Ramakrishna Math, 1956) p. 224.

2. *Revelation*, 1.8.

being considered the 'brother' of the spiritual joy of Brahman, *brahmānanda sahodara*. Wonderment (*āścarya*) supplied by the myths adds a golden lustre to creative imagination. Wonder also effaces egoism, purifies the mind, and brings religious tears of devotion in our eyes. What else could be our reaction to the Ajāmila myth or Mārkaṇḍeya myth? Creative imagination and wonderment give us a rich harvest of religious heroes as archetypes who come to live in our deeper layers and with the help of the *samskāric* potential make our daily spiritual life worth living.

### Archetypes

Here East joins West. Dr. Jung speaks of the vital role of archetypes in the transformation of consciousness. They live in our unconscious to activate and liberate the unconscious energies. The archetypes fired by creative imagination switch off consciousness. This switching off, to a large extent gives the unconscious contents a chance to develop, freed as they are from the censor of the conscious.

What are the archetypes? In one of his posthumous works, available only in French and German, Jung says :

One meets with the expression archetype already in the writings of Philo of Alexandria (1st century B.C.) who refers to the image of God in man. The creator of the world did not make the things from himself but transformed them from archetypes not belonging to his person. In St. Augustine one does not find the term as such, but the idea.<sup>5</sup>

Archetypes are collective representations and designate the psychical contents which have not undergone a conscious or rational elaboration. To be more precise, a distinction should be made between archetypes and archetypal representations. A pure archetype is a hypothetical model, not yet manifest, like a 'pattern of behaviour' of the biologists. It is a psychical 'situation'<sup>6</sup>

Jung illustrates the nature of archetypes by giving examples :

The sun and the moon, light and darkness, water (as symbol of movement and stillness), Mother, Father, Trinity, Sacrifice as the act of giving, so vital for transformation etc etc. What is important is to remember that sunrise and sunset, the seasons like summer and winter are not simply outside phenomena, but situations in the soul, psychical events representing in its metamorphosis the destiny of the celestial orbs or of a hero whose home is nowhere else than the soul of man. The external phenomena are 'mythitized' by us when lived intensely with the ups and downs of the soul<sup>7</sup>

### Archetype and myth-experience

As Jung has pointed out, archetypes are to be distinguished from instincts which are psycho-physical drives. Archetypes are children of the Spirit, whereas instincts are children of matter. They are face to face in the unconscious. An exchange between them is in the very nature of life, as also the results thereof. Archetypes supply the energy-forms for dreams, and dreams furnish material to the psychoanalyst. The repressed desires (instincts) sink into the unconscious where there is a possibility of dialogue between them and the archetypes of Space and Light. But if the person is 'blocked' inside, such a face-to-face is impossible. A conflict-situation is born and it manifests on the conscious level as neurosis.

Happily, archetypes can also supply material for dreams of patients on the road to recovery. Jung in his book, *Roots of Consciousness* gives some twenty cases of patients dreaming of the Tree of Life and Knowledge. They designed what they had seen in dream and sent the designs to him. No one design was similar to the other, which means the springs of inspiration in each case were personal. The tree is an

5. *Roots of Consciousness*, p. 14.

6. *ibid*, p. 16.

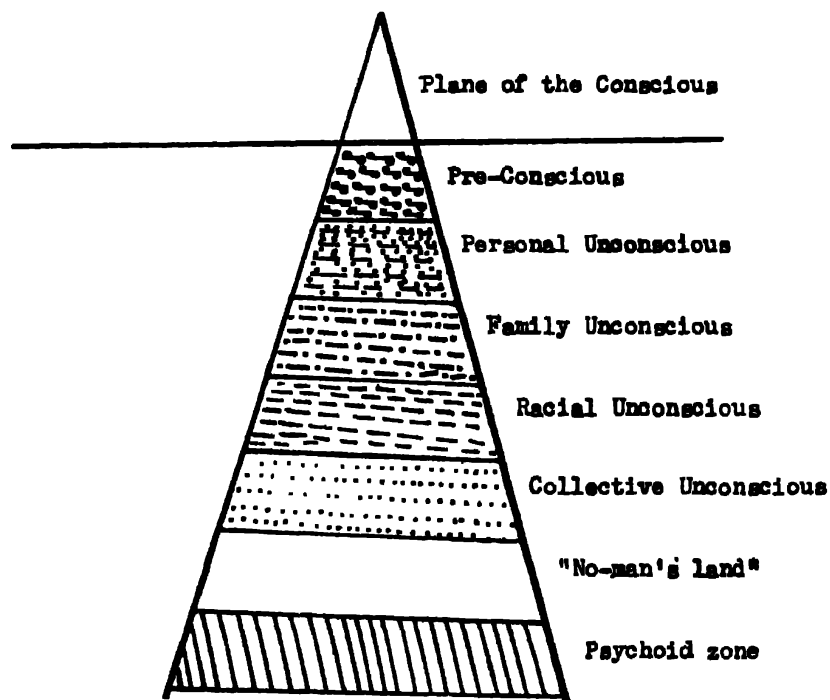
7. *ibid*, p. 16-17.



archetype of growth.<sup>8</sup> For a patient suffering from inner stagnation and blockage, dreaming of a Tree is tending to greater inner space and dynamism. The different layers of the unconscious initiate and propel this dynamism. And more specially the psychoid, which is the psychotic capital at the base of the psyche.<sup>9</sup> There is an all-out collaboration of the various levels of the unconscious to 'live' the Tree of Life and Knowledge. The Tree becomes a myth, a totality-experience worthy to be lived. Of course in the cases quoted above the experience was in dream. Dream-experience is true so long as it is lived. The psychoanalyst can, by suggestions, make the patient live a myth in the waking state and help the patient to return to normalcy. Similarly, but in a higher sense, a spiritual master can make a

disciple 'live' the myth of Śrī Kṛṣṇa or of Śiva by galvanizing his unconscious and psychoid.

At this stage it is imperative that we know the scheme of the psyche according to Jung. Jung conceives our personality as an iceberg, a small part of it only being visible, the conscious. The rest remains hidden. It is called the unconscious with various layers, the personal unconscious, the family unconscious, the racial unconscious and the collective unconscious. And at the base lies the psychoid. Jung says: The psychoid is a global concept covering the principal sub-cortical phenomena. It includes all the corporal functions of the central nervous system orientated towards the goal, namely, a primordial memory which wants the conservation of life.<sup>10</sup>



A DIAGRAMATIC REPRESENTATION OF HUMAN PSYCHE

8. We are tempted to compare the Tree with the Asvattha of the *Gītā*, 15.1-3.

9. By 'psychoid' Jung refers to the animating and directing principle at the base of our personality. We may regard it as corresponding to our total *samskāra* capital. See the author's article 'Our Three-floor Mansion' in *Prabuddha Bharata* March, 1982, p. 104-5.

All that Jung says about the psychoid makes us conclude that the psychoid is our *samskāric* capital. The *samskāras*, the residual impressions of past experiences, the psychotic potential in us, has a personal character and is the animating and direct-

10. *Roots of Consciousness*, p. 489.

ing principle. Even divine Grace which can bring about total changes in us has to take into account the maturation of *samskāras*.

As we said earlier, *an all-out cooperation of the various zones of the unconscious under the initiative of the psychoid is necessary to bring about a myth-experience*. There is a constant exchange between the conscious and the unconscious layers. It is the psychoid that directs this exchange. The unconscious cannot submit to the influence of the psychoid unless the unconscious has got something spiritual. Jung is open to accept the Superconscious in its Indian connotation: 'My notion of the unconscious leaves entirely open the question of the Superconscious or the subconscious, including the one or the other which are aspects of psychism.'<sup>11</sup>

#### *Rāsa-līlā : a complete myth situation*

Students of the *Bhāgavata Purāṇa* easily recapitulate the *rāsa-līlā* (erotic dance) of Bhagavān Śrī Kṛṣṇa as set forth in its 10th skandha, 32nd chapter and in the hymn known as the 'Gopikāgītā' a little earlier. Describing the reappearance of the Lord after the short disappearance, which was a test to the Gopis, the author of the epic says :

Then to the Gopis Kṛṣṇa reappeared suddenly with a smiling face. He was dressed in yellow and wore a garland. The beauty of his form would have put to shame even Cupid (*sākṣāt manmathamanmathah*).

One of the commentators makes out that to meditate on this heavenly beautiful form of Kṛṣṇa is to conquer the machinations of Cupid in our hearts. The upshot of the whole *rāsa-līlā* is the transforming power of Kṛṣṇa's love. Though the Gopis at the start love Kṛṣṇa physically, Kṛṣṇa's love made them transcend the physical plane. He

restored to the Gopis the totality of Being. The Kṛṣṇa myth especially as it is present in the *rāsa-līlā* comes to us as an effective means to restore totality to the human individual. This tallies very well with a remarkable definition of myth by Jung: Myth helps man to realize his totality, and this, thanks to the mythical character of the unconscious.

To 'live' a myth situation is a perfect meditation. In meditation we install our *ista-devatā* (Chosen Deity) on the conscious plane. Our fervour of Bhakti galvanizes the layers of the unconscious where dwell the archetypes of the power and glory of our *īṣṭam*. Under the leadership of the psychoid (the *samskāric* capital) waves of religious emotion well up from the depths on to the conscious plane. We are overwhelmed.

#### *Myth has become mute in the West*

Jung says in his autobiography :

Our myth has become mute and gives no answers. The fault lies not in it as it is set down in the Scriptures, but solely in us, who have not developed it further, who, rather, have suppressed any such attempts. The original version of the myth offers ample points of departure and possibilities of development. For example, the words are put into Christ's mouth. 'Be ye therefore wise as serpents and harmless as doves.' For what purpose do men need the cunning of serpents? And what is the link between this cunning and the innocence of the dove? 'Except ye become as little children' <sup>12</sup>

Return to primordial innocence is a spiritual rebirth so vital to our everyday life. And a bit earlier :

The Christian nations have come to a sorry pass; their Christianity slumbers and has

(Continued on page 131)

<sup>11</sup>. *ibid*, p. 491.

<sup>12</sup>. Carl G. Jung, *Memories, Dreams and Reflections* (London: Routledge and Kegan Paul, 1963) p. 306.



## CAUGHT FOR WORSHIP IN THE RIGHT PLACE

Date : 12 January 1983, 10.00 a.m.

Place: A park near the place where the Ramakrishna Ashrama Marg, the Panchsain Road and the Chitracharya Road cross one another in New Delhi.

Some years ago a statue of Swami Vivekananda was set up in the above park by the Municipal Corporation of Delhi. The unveiling ceremony was being postponed for some unknown reasons. The statue was kept wrapped up for a considerable time. Then, one night came a cyclonic storm. Next morning the statue was found standing unveiled. This was indeed a perfect unveiling of the statue of the 'cyclonic monk'!

This cold morning the Corporation of Delhi was celebrating Swamiji's birth anniversary, as they had been doing through the years on January 12th every year. Among the thousands of celebrations of Swamiji's birth anniversary, I thought this one was indeed unique and most appropriate. In the course of his talk the Chief Guest at the function, the Secretary of the local Ramakrishna Mission, said:

At the invitation of the Commissioner of the Municipal Corporation of Delhi I come here every year to join you all in this celebration. And every time this one thought comes to my mind: among Swamiji's birth anniversaries

celebrated in uncounted places on this planet, this roadside anniversary of the Delhi Municipal Corporation is, indeed, a very special one. I shall go to the extent of saying that it would be natural for Swamiji to be pleased to be present here in spirit and participate in this function. If you ask me, 'Why do you think so?', I have a simple answer. Obviously this triangular park near the conjunction of three traffic-loaded roads, full of the bustle of fast moving vehicles and people at a peak hour, would appear to be not a very suitable place for this celebration. This is not the premises of a Math or a temple. Nor do we have here a well-furnished lecture hall. This is also not an exclusive assemblage of a chosen few. Here we find a flowing river of human beings on the move, and on its banks an extraordinary meeting is being held.

Swamiji spent a good part of his short life on roads. No one knows how many nights he slept under road-side trees while eating food brought by sheer chance. He had no house. But there was none who was not his own. While staying as a wanderer on roads, Swamiji demonstrated to the people the way of the free, the way leading to the supreme goal of life. Thus he became the pathfinder for all.

Please look at the scene presented here before your eyes. In this unusual festival the venerable monks, our respected Commissioner of the Delhi Municipal Corporation and the distinguished citizens of Delhi are joined by our sweeper brethren and men from the armed forces, small children and women, learned people and unlettered ones. All have come here out of their love and enthusiasm with the one objective of paying homage to Swamiji.

Swamiji was simultaneously a patriot and a universalist. His patriotism was rooted in his universalism; and his universalism was rooted in his patriotism. This is why Swamiji has a message for each and all. Now, if we would resolve today to put into practice a few of his teachings, then, to be sure, our present and future would become luminous.

Before the Swami spoke, the Commissioner of Delhi Municipal Corporation had spoken with an unusual ring of sincerity in his voice and an articulate sense of the urgency of the need for following Swamiji's teachings for personal, social and national well-being.

On the sidewalk one Brahmacharin and several dedicated workers of the Ramakrishna Mission were selling Vedanta and Ramakrishna-Vivekananda literature from a mobile book shop—quite a sprightly idea.

What impressed one standing on the sidewalk as an onlooker was the dynamics of the whole celebration going so well with the spirit of Parivrajaka Vivekananda, who was always on the move rousing people everywhere with the central message of the Upanishads, 'Arise, awake and stop not till the goal is reached.'

This celebration by the side of the road alive with waves of moving people, which highlighted the message of what abides forever amidst the evanescent happenings, was peculiarly appropriate for Delhi, the epicentre of all turmoil in India's national life and the highest seat of momentous decision-making. More particularly, it was so appropriate to the spirit of Vivekananda's teaching, 'Onward forever!'

Nothing fascinates me so much as following the footprints of this leonine wandering monk Vivekananda, whom the Spanish writer Dr. Felix Marti-Ibanez called the 'Militant Mystic'. Dr. Felix had deeply experienced the fascination of the Vivekananda phenomenon, perhaps next only to Romain Rolland, among Europeans. When he was once asked, 'What do you

consider to be the most valuable thing in your life', he replied:

Life itself. Health, and dreams and love. . . If what is meant by 'things', however, is something concrete in a physical form, then I would have to say books. I was actually once put to the test of what I value most. It was in February 1939, when I had to leave Spain because of the fall of the Republic and all I could take with me was what I could carry. I chose to take one book. From the thousands of books in the library, which I had so lovingly built up with my father, I selected *The Life of Swami Vivekananda and the Universal Gospel* by Romain Rolland. That uniquely magnificent mystical book inspired me through the years to dedicate my life to the service of others<sup>1</sup>

Walking alone on the dusty roads, hills, planes, deserts and sea shores of India, Vivekananda was seeking something which India needed, and the world needed more. In those days when he had not yet 'burst upon society like a bombshell', to quote his own words, this 'Pilgrim of India', as Romain Rolland calls him, was wandering and wondering as to how he was to fulfil the mission and carry out the mandate given to him by his Master, Sri Ramakrishna. The mission, as pronounced by Sri Ramakrishna on the first day young Naren entered his Master's room in Dakshineswar, was that he was born 'to revive the miseries of mankind'. Five years later, the mandate was given by the Master in writing, 'Naren will teach'. The mission was to be fulfilled through the mandate and the mandate was to be worked out in the mission. Sri Ramakrishna set aflame Naren's oceanic heart with love for man, which was the other name of *bhakti*, devotion to God, with which he was born. He received from his Guru the *jiva-Siva mantra*, and the spiritual power and vision to work out the implications of this *mantra*, in the affairs of mankind and the making of history. He was so taken through the

1. *The Mirror of Souls* (1971) p. 310.

ravages of suffering that wherever suffering was it automatically became his own, through the tincture of empathy. Though already vastly learned, in his wandering days Vivekananda read anew and in depths and heights the open book of life with the eyes of a knower of Brahman, who had shed ignorance and delusion, false fears and false expectations, and in whose heart welled forth limpid love for everyone.

Vivekananda discovered India in all her dimensions, in all her glory and all her wretchedness, and what is more, discovered the mission of India to be the mother-healer and teacher of mankind, call it a conquest, if you would. However, Vivekananda's is only that kind of conquest which defeats none, but awakens, enlivens and enlightens everyone. He taught as he had realized that India was not only sound at heart, but strong enough and wise enough to teach mankind. Religion was not only not at fault, but it was in the eternal vital principles of religion alone there is succour and salvation for all. The fault was we failed to practise the true religion in life.

It was at some point during his days of wanderings that Vivekananda found that essential religion and eternal India attained at-one-ment in the world-soul which was not different from his own. After that, wherever he went, he became the awakener, who called forth with such a life-renewing power that a prostrate nation awoke and stood up to dare and do.

What was the outcome? Only a partial harvest in a sphere of Swamiji's service was announced by Chakravarty Rajagopalachari on the eve of Swami Vivekananda's birth anniversary, and yet it sounds so beautifully great because every word of it is true. He wrote on 27 July 1962:

Swami Vivekananda saved Hinduism, saved India. But for him, we would have lost our

religion and would not have gained our freedom. We therefore owe everything to Swami Vivekananda. May his faith, his courage, and his wisdom ever inspire us so that we may keep safe the treasures we have received from him!

The Hinduism that Vivekananda 'saved' is essential religion as such, the quintessence of all faiths. The India that Vivekananda 'saved' is not so much of a geographical entity, as the attained state of spiritual excellence with infinite possibilities for all mankind.

Rajagopalachari's handsome tribute to Vivekananda did not, however, encompass his work in the Western hemisphere. Sri Aurobindo said with masterly insight:

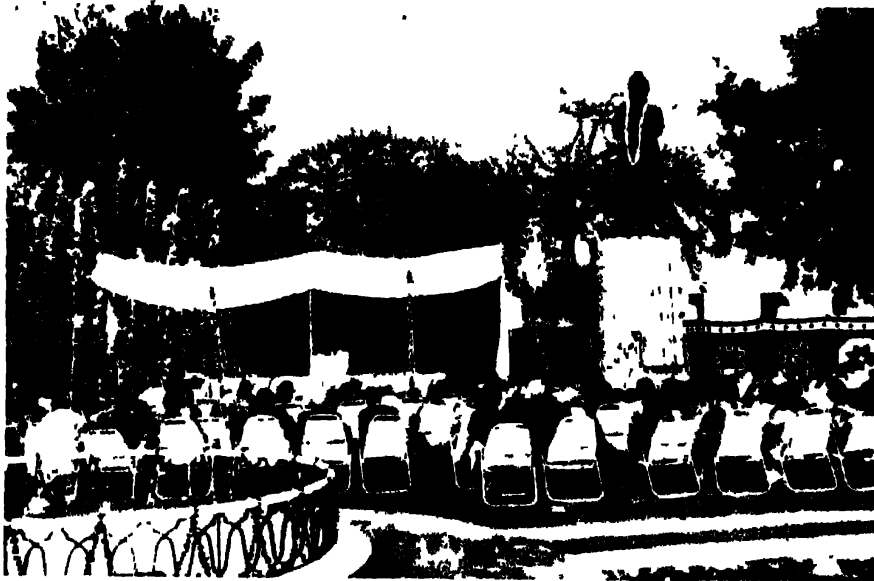
The going forth of Vivekananda marked out by the Master (Sri Ramakrishna) as the heroic soul destined to take the world between his two hands and change it, was the first visible sign to the world that India was awake, not only to survive but to conquer.

Swami Vivekananda was a soul of puissance, if ever there was one, a very lion among men. We perceive his influence still working gigantically, we know not how, we know not well where, in something that is not yet formed, something lionine, grand, intuitive, upheaving that has entered into the soul of India, and we may say, 'Behold! Vivekananda still lives in the soul of his Mother, and in the soul of her children.'<sup>2</sup>

The Delhi Municipal Corporation has honoured itself in honouring Vivekananda. However, I venture to think that the Government of India and the Indian nation need and should install Vivekananda's statue more centrally in Delhi, to evince its appreciation of Vivekananda's central role in creating the history of modern India.

The city of Bombay had the right instinct of honouring itself by installing Vivek-

2. *Sri Aurobindo Birth Centenary Library* (Pondicherry: Sri Aurobindo Ashram, 1972) vol. 17, ch. 9, p. 332.



Swami Vivekananda Birth Anniversary by the Municipal Corporation of Delhi on 12 January, 1983



The audience sitting near the cross section of the three roads



The Secretary, Ramakrishna Mission, New Delhi addressing the audience

Senior Monks of the  
Ramakrishna Order  
among the audience



Vedanta Ramakrishna-  
Vivekananda Literature  
being sold near the site  
of the celebration

The statue of Gandhiji's dandi  
march near the Wellington  
Crescent in New Delhi





The vacant pedestal on which installation of Parivrajaka Vivekananda is suggested near the India Gate, New Delhi





The statue of Swami Vivekananda  
Bombay, near the Gateway of India



The statue of Swami Vivekananda  
Calcutta, behind the Victoria Memorial

ananda's statue in front of the Gateway of India.

The people of Government of West Bengal honoured themselves by erecting a statue of Vivekananda in the city of his birth.

The city of Delhi will do well to honour itself by the installation of a magnificent statue of Parivrajaka Vivekananda in front of the India Gate. Such an installation will be a source of inspiration and enlightenment for all, generation after generation. The unique thing about the great Swami is that because he had 'nothing to do with nonsense of politics', to quote his own words, people of all political views find it possible to cherish love and regard for him.

Explaining the rationale of this phenomenon, Pandit Jawaharlal Nehru said:

Rooted in the past and full of pride in India's heritage, Vivekananda was yet modern in his approach to life's problems and was a kind of bridge between the past of India and her present. So what Swamiji has written and said is of interest, and must interest us, and is likely to influence us for a long time to come. He was no politician in the ordinary sense of the word and yet he was, I think, one of the great founders—if you like, you may use any other word—of the national modern movement of India, and a great number of people who took more or less an active part in that movement on a later date drew their inspiration from Swami Vivekananda. Directly or indirectly, he has powerfully influenced the India of today. And I think that our younger generation will take advantage of this fountain of wisdom, of

spirit and fire, that flows through Swami Vivekananda.

Parivrajaka Vivekananda standing on the present empty pedestal before the India Gate will be the silent thundering call to the nation: 'Arise, awake, and stop not till the goal is reached'.

I am not unaware of the fact that there had been a proposal to fix a statue of Gandhiji before the India Gate. But now that the statue of Gandhiji's Dandi March, made by the celebrated sculptor Devi Pradsad Roy Chaudhury, has been fixed in a magnificent manner at Wellington Crescent, the place near the India Gate would appear to have been providentially preserved for the fixing of the Parivrajaka Vivekananda. If there were any way of contacting Gandhiji for his personal view in the matter, I am absolutely sure, Gandhiji would decline to endorse the people's or the Government's proposal for fixing another of his own statue in that place. I am not indulging in any kite-flying, for did not Gandhiji say during one of his visits to the Belur Math in 1923:

I have gone through Vivekananda's works very thoroughly, and after having gone through them the love that I had for my country became a thousandfold.

Now it is for the people of India, the Members of Parliament and the Government of India to consider whether or not these musings of the Musafir make any sense.

# A NEW ALTAR FOR THE FLAME OF TIBETAN BUDDHISM\*

SWAMI ATMARUPANANDA

I stepped down from the bus into a misty, overcast dawn, the September air still but chilly. As the bus disappeared up the mountain I realized that this was the wrong stop. This wasn't the main bus station for the Himalayan town of Dharamsala but a secondary stop. So together with my bags I began to follow the road up the mountain, through town.

Not knowing how far I had to go made it seem awfully long, but finally the bus station came into view at the top of the town. There I was glad to find many Tibetan faces—mostly faces of Tibetan monks and nuns. Seeing a Westerner in Tibetan monastic robes, I approached and asked, 'Is this where I catch the bus to the Tibetan settlement?'

'Yes, get the bus to Macleodganj,' he answered in a Dutch or German accent.'

'Do you know of a good place to stay?' I asked.

'Oh, no problem! There are lots of places, and lots of people already there. You'll have no trouble; it's a great place.'

Encouraged after a discouraging overnight busride of fifteen hours from Delhi and a long, tiring walk up the mountain, I purchased my ticket and soon was on my way to Macleodganj. The bus wound its way up and along the mountainside another ten kilometres before we reached our destination. We were let out in a cluster of tall deodar trees at the edge of the small village.

Having lived in the Himalayas for five years, I was used to beautiful scenery, but what I saw now was truly magnificent. Dharamsala, also called Lower Dharamsala, lay at the base of the first line of mountains that rise out of the plains of Himachal Pradesh. Macleodganj, or Upper Dharamsala, was high up on the side of the same

mountain at an elevation of 6,050 feet. There being no other mountain before Macleodganj, it overlooked the vast plains of North India far below. At first the next mountain rising still higher behind Macleodganj was hidden by clouds; but after a while the clouds broke revealing fresh-fallen snow on the bare stone towering above us. Far below, the green plains; high above, the white snow against the massive, sky-scraping stone; and around a Himalayan forest, now lush green from the recent monsoon.

Not knowing what to do or where to go, I began to walk around the town, which had basically two short, parallel streets and one perpendicular at the beginning of town. After walking down each of the streets two or three times, I felt oriented (though others watching must have thought me desperately lost, walking as I was down the same street several times with all my luggage in hand).

There were a number of Tibetan-run hotels, all of them cheap and simple, some cleaner than others. I put up at the Rainbow Hotel next to the bus-stop, where I got a double room on the roof for Rs. 15 a night, with a view of the town and surroundings from the terrace.

Once having secured a room, I made my way to the Dalai Lama's temple. The path led along a paved road that wound through forest, about a ten-minute walk from the village on a gradual downhill

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\* The photographs used for illustration were taken by Mr. Edwin Bernbaum of Berkeley, California, through whose courtesy they are reproduced here. The author owes a debt of gratitude also to Miss Ann Myren of Alameda, California, and to Mr. Simon Luna of the Dharmadhatu Meditation Center, Austin, Texas, for much patient help in locating the photographs.

slope. First to meet the eye at the end of the road was the Phendey Lekshed Ling monastery and monastic school, including a debating school. Above and just beyond the monastery was the temple, and beyond that was the Dalai Lama's estate.

Tibetan temples differ in several important respects from those of the Hindu. The basic differences arise from the fact that, in the Hindu tradition, worship is a private affair whereas in the Tibetan it is often led by a congregation of monks. The inner sanctum of a traditional Hindu temple is very small, allowing room only for the priest and maybe one or two assistants. Devotees file before the sanctum to have *darśan* or sanctifying sight of the deity, and then pass on. At most they may give the priest some flowers or incense or food to be offered on their behalf.

But, though Tibetan monastics and householders normally have their own small, private shrines, their public temples tend to be large and spacious, allowing a number of monks to gather for special ceremonies. The image is not protected in a cavelike sanctum but is at one end of the usually large hall. Furthermore, though Tibetans don't share a refined sense of personal purity with the Hindu, they do keep their temples immaculately clean and beautifully adorned in every detail.

The temple I now approached was a handsome building, spacious, beautifully painted, yet surely austere and simple by the standard of Tibet before the Chinese occupation. It was raised above the surroundings, and encircled by a wide platform for circumambulation. Along the outer walls on three sides were lines of large bronze prayer wheels which the devout caused to rotate by a push of the hand as they circumambulated the temple.

Inside, the main deity was Amitābha Buddha, his statue tall and imposing. Over to the left side when facing the main

image was a small, fenced-off chapel housing a statue of the eleven-headed, thousand-armed Avalokiteśvara, or Chenrezi as Tibetans know their tutelary deity. Chenrezi is the bodhisattva of compassion, who has vowed to assist all sentient beings to *nirvāṇa*, not entering final peace himself until all others have gone first. His eleven heads symbolize simultaneous perception of all suffering everywhere in the universe; and his thousand arms symbolize his innumerable simultaneous acts to free all beings from pain and delusion.

Tibet has often been castigated for making a farce of 'true' Buddhism. Tibetan Buddhism is thought to be a degenerate school of superstition in which practically every tenet taught by the Buddha has been perverted beyond recognition. Close study, however, reveals a surprising fact. For all its bizarre external appearance, Tibetan Buddhism is firmly grounded in the basic principles of Mahāyāna Buddhism. And Tibetan monks, far from being superstitious primitives, are often possessed of profound philosophical minds and deep psychological insight. Fortunately, there is a growing recognition among present-day scholars that Tibetan Buddhism is not a contradiction of the Buddha's teachings, but an evolution. Not the *only* possible line of evolution, certainly, but one of the many which came as Buddhism adapted itself to various races and cultures.

Among the supposed 'perverse superstitions' prevalent in Tibet is the belief in and worship of numerous gods and goddesses and various orders of supernatural beings.

It is well known that the Buddha did not teach the existence of a creator god who must be supplicated by the faithful for the sake of their salvation. He taught that the universe is not created by the hand of a god or gods but that it arises by a chain of causation which rests ultimately

on ignorance; and the way to enlightenment is destruction of ignorance, not the grace of a god. Then why the worship of, not one, but a whole pantheon of deities by Tibetans?

First of all, Tibetan deities are not creator gods or goddesses, eternally separate from their worshippers. Rather they are celestial Buddhas and Bodhisattvas who personify mystical energies that lead one to enlightenment, energies which ultimately are not separate from their worshipper.

The ultimate Reality in Mahāyāna Buddhism is known as the Void. The Void and the world of form or relativity, however, are not two but one. Mind, when quiescent, is the Void; when disturbed, it creates/perceives the world of form. (In a similar vein Swami Vivekananda once said that 'the Many and the One are the same Reality, perceived by the same mind at different times and in different attitudes'.<sup>1</sup>) Furthermore, the individual mind and cosmic Mind are not ultimately different.

The relationship of celestial Buddhas and Bodhisattvas to Reality is beautifully expressed in one of John Blofeld's books through the words of Mr. P'an, one of his Chinese Buddhist friends:

The Great Void and the realm of form are not two! There is no going from the one to the other, only a transmutation of your mode of perception. Mind is like a boundless ocean of light, or infinite space, from which streams forth Bodhi, a marvellous energy that produces in us an urge towards Enlightenment. From Bodhi emanate particularised streams of liberating energy—the energies of wisdom, compassion, of the pure activity needed to combine them, and so forth. These, in turn, subdivide and thus become more tangible to minds deluded by the false notion of self-existing egos and self-existing objects. In some marvellous way, these streams and substreams become embodied in forms like those which divinities are thought to have, the

primary streams as what we call celestial Buddhas, the secondary streams as what are called celestial Bodhisattvas.<sup>2</sup>

As an example, Amitābha Buddha, who is highly popular in the devotional schools of Buddhism, embodies the primary energy of compassion. Avalokiteśvara is a secondary emanation of the energy of compassion who, the scriptures declare, was born from a ray of light that issued from Amitābha's right eye. Tārā, the most popular and beloved of Tibetan deities, is a tertiary emanation who was born of a lotus in an ocean of tears shed by Avalokiteśvara in sorrow for the world. 'Secondary' and 'tertiary' are misleading terms, however, for each of these is sometimes raised to the highest level and praised as the source of all the Buddha's and Bodhisattvas:

Homage to Aryā Tārā, at whose lotus feet  
The gods and non-gods make worship  
Homage to Tārā, mother of all Buddhas,  
Who heralds freedom from limitation<sup>3</sup>

It would be a mistake to think that these deities are mere contrived symbols used to educate those who can't grasp abstract truths. No, as with the gods and goddesses in the Hindu tradition, they are no more contrived than you or I or the world around us. Within the world of form they seem to have a life of their own and are as real as the world itself, perhaps more real, for they belong to a higher plane of truth: only in the Void do all such distinctions as higher and lower lose meaning. Therefore there is a genuine devotional element in Tibetan Buddhism.

Going back outside of the temple, I made a circumambulation and gave a push

2. John Blofeld, *Bodhisattva of Compassion* (Boulder: Shambhala, 1978), p. 22.

3. The First Dalai Lama, *Six Texts Related to the Tara Tantra*, trans. Glenn H. Mullin (New Delhi: Tibet House, 1980), p. 27.

1. *Complete Works of Swami Vivekananda* (Calcutta: Advaita Ashrama, 1977), vol. 8, p. 261.

to the prayer wheels, then sought a place on the wide platform circling the temple from which to view the enchanting scenery.

On leaving the temple I passed among the monastery buildings again. Phendey Lekshed Ling is a monastery of the Ge-lug sect, youngest of the four major sects of Tibetan Buddhism.

Buddhism was, perhaps, first established on a strong footing in Tibet by the great Indian Tāntrik mystic Padmasambhava in the late eighth century. 'Perhaps', because there is some doubt as to just how much he did to establish Buddhism in Tibet.<sup>4</sup> In later centuries, however, his legend assumed great importance. There is no doubt that he was a powerful missionary of remarkable spiritual and psychic attainment. The oldest sect of Buddhism, the Nying-ma, descends directly from him. The abundant legend which grew around his name, however sought to demonstrate the antinomian nature of his character. That is, it often described him as drunken and unchaste in an exaggerated effort to demonstrate that the man of enlightenment is beyond all dualities, including good and evil, and acts in a realm of freedom from all social compulsion, though the legend also emphasized that even his so-called immoral actions sprang from wisdom and compassion and actually brought blessings to all sentient beings in their train. Unfortunately, this legend was usually taken in a literal rather than mythological or psychological sense, leading to degeneration.<sup>5</sup>

In spite of this, the Nying-ma-pas—as

followers of the sect are called<sup>6</sup>—have preserved an amazing wealth of yogic knowledge and have continued to produce men of great character and enlightenment. They do have monks, but most of their lamas are married. (It is a common mistake to assume that monks in Tibet are allowed to marry. This is not true. The misunderstanding arises from the fact that 'lama' is believed to be the Tibetan equivalent of 'monk'. But it isn't. It corresponds to 'guru'. Just as among Hindus gurus may be lay or monastic, so in Tibet with the lamas. Monks in Tibet are expected to abide by their vows; if they marry, they are no longer considered monks. The confusion is worse confounded by the fact that all monks are referred to as lama out of respect, though technically it applies only to respected teachers.)

The Ka-rgyu lineage traces its origins to the great Indian yogi Tilopa and his disciple Naropa. Naropa taught Marpa the Translator (1012-96)—an illumined Tibetan yogi remained a householder. Marpa brought a number of Buddhist texts from India to Tibet, where he translated them from Sanskrit into Tibetan. His foremost disciple was Milarepa (1040-1123), sometimes considered the greatest saint in Tibetan history. Milarepa was celibate, and since his time perfect preservation of sexual energy has been considered essential for anyone wishing to master the difficult yogas taught by this lineage.

In 1040, Atīśa of the famous Vikramaśīla monastery arrived in Tibet from India at the invitation of the kings of Gu-ge, western Tibet. He was an important reformer who improved the moral standard of the monastic order by insisting on strict celibacy and discipline and by discouraging magic which had become so prevalent

4. Helmut Hoffman, *Tibet* (Bloomington: Research Center for the Language Sciences, no date), p. 129.

5. Tibetans, like the Hindus, freely mixed mythology with history, rarely recognizing the distinction. It is of course possible that the legend has some element of truth, for Padmasambhava was a Tāntrik,

6. The Tibetan particle *pa* seems to serve a function similar to the Hindi word *wāṛā*, giving the sense of 'one belonging to' or 'person of'.

through the influence of the original Bon religion of Tibet as well as through the magic displays of the Tāntrik Padmasambhava. In time this reform became the Ka-dam school, which in turn was to give way to the Ge-lug school.

The Sa-kya school was founded by Konchog Gyalpo who was born in 1034. This sect was very important in the organization of the Buddhist order and in the consolidation of secular power.

A man of great importance in Tibetan religious history was Tsong-kha-pa, born in Amdo, Tibet, in the year 1357. By nature he was strictly disciplined, of pure character, and possessed of great spiritual and intellectual power. He carried on the reform begun by the Ka-dam-pas and founded the Ge-lug sect. Tsong-kha-pa didn't neglect the Tantras; rather he 'showed a special tendency to purify Tantrism and to prevent evil men from exploiting the study and practice of the tantras to satisfy their lower instincts.'<sup>7</sup> Even the purified Tantras, however, he allowed to be practised outside of the monasteries only. The Ge-lug-pas have been noted for their depth of scriptural knowledge, keenness of intellect, and strictness of discipline. Before their final ordination as monks, followers of the sect must pass about twenty years in study.

In time the Ge-lug-pas became the dominant sect in Tibet, and practically the only sect in Mongolia. The line of Dalai Lamas belongs to this lineage. And from 1642 when the Fifth Dalai Lama was given temporal power over Tibet, the sect has been both spiritual and temporal leader of Tibet.

These four sects—the Nying-ma-pas, Ka-rgyu-pas, Sa-kya-pas and Ge-lug-pas—follow the same basic philosophy, though some tend more towards Yogācāra (like the Sa-kya-pas) while others stress

Mādhyaṃika. Important distinctions, however, lie in their particular lineages of teachers, their tutelary deities, and their body of spiritual techniques rather than philosophy. The Nying-ma-pas are more Tāntrik in emphasis, the Ka-rgyu-pas emphasize yoga, the Ge-lug-pas stress intellectual development and dialectical enquiry into truth in addition to meditation. Even these distinctions are not absolute.

Though Macleodganj has monks belonging to different traditions, the Ge-lug-pas are by far predominant, Macleodganj being the seat of the Dalai Lama's government in exile. Phendey Lekshed Ling is the largest monastery there. As of 1981 it had eighty-five monks.

Now as I walked among the monastic buildings it looked as though the monks were getting ready to eat lunch, which reminded me of the time.

Returning to the village I roamed the streets again until settling on a restaurant for my own meal—Om Restaurant run by Tibetans, serving Tibetan and Chinese food. There were several other Tibetan restaurants in town, and that is what I wanted, but this one had the not-so-Tibetan advantage of cakes freshly baked by an Englishwoman living above town. And here I was to come for most of my meals during the rest of my sojourn. Each restaurant in Macleodganj had its own atmosphere and character. At Om no alcohol was served, the people were friendly, the atmosphere good, and the food also good, though sometimes you would be served only thirty to forty minutes after ordering. Tibetans are normally meat eaters, but Om had a fine selection of vegetarian food as well.

I found Tibetan food to be very good, especially their much-maligned butter tea. This latter is a salted emulsion of butter in tea. It's actually more like a vegetarian bouillon than what Indians or Westerners consider tea, for it is salted rather than

<sup>7</sup>. Hoffman, *Tibet*, p. 165.

sweetened and has butter rather than milk or lemon. No, contrary to popular belief, Tibetan tea need not be made with rancid butter: the butter used at Macleodganj is fresh. It doesn't float on top of the tea because it is completely emulsified with the help of a special churn used only for the purpose.

As I now discovered, Tibetan cuisine shows much Chinese influence. The food is even eaten Chinese style with chopsticks. This isn't surprising, for Tibetan culture in general has been heavily influenced by both China and India. India, because the form of Buddhism prevalent in Tibet came from there rather than China. In fact, early in the history of Buddhism in the Land of Snows there was a great debate to discover whether the Indian or the Chinese form of Buddhism was more acceptable. The Indian representatives won, and thenceforward Tibet made India rather than China her guru in matters religious. So Tibetan religious thought and culture have come predominantly from India. But many other aspects of Tibetan culture have been heavily influenced by China. For, though the Tibetans are a distinctive race, they are closer racially and linguistically to the Chinese than to Indians. It is therefore only natural that they should have been very open to Chinese cultural influence. In view of recent events in Tibet, however, it is important to emphasize that no matter how much it has borrowed from India and China, Tibet has its own distinctive race, language, culture and history.

After lunch I looked at the shops and scenes around Macleodganj. Though small, the town never ceased to fascinate: it was so full of colour and life. You could easily imagine yourself in Tibet rather than India, for the town's population was Tibetan, with a handful of Indian shopkeepers and a number of Western visitors.

As in most Asian communities today,

the Tibetan men generally wear Western clothes, or at least a compromise between Western and Tibetan, while the women dress traditionally. Though I didn't see any of the elaborate, top-heavy headgear which women used to wear in Tibet on special occasions, they do all wear the customary dark, sleeveless dress over a colourful blouse. And whereas Indian women wear their hair in a single braid down their back, Tibetan women have two long braids.

Contrary to the usual in Asia, Tibetan women enjoy a high degree of independence. They are genuine partners with their husbands, taking part in all sorts of work. This shows in their uninhibited, confident behaviour and bearing.

The Tibetans are a charming people, both physically and temperamentally. Every Westerner I've known that has had any contact with them has become a staunch admirer. The best corrective for the common belief that Tibetans are a bizarre race of mystery mongers is to meet them, for they are down-to-earth, practical, hospitable, and friendly, bearing a never-long-suppressed smile.

Tibetan children are especially beautiful. They combine the same strands of innocence and mischief as all children do, but in their case both strands seem equal and intensified to the nth degree, producing a most lovable result. In the morning I had heard about eighty-five small children shouting out their lessons from the Tibetan Day School. This institution, which was located below the street in the slope side of the mountain, held children from kindergarten through Class III. As I watched them coming en masse, they looked like angels just waiting for a chance to pull the most devilish pranks.

Seeing the smiles and the almost carefree spirit of the people as I walked around, it was hard to imagine that these



were the same people who had suffered one of the greatest tragedies possible to man: genocide and the loss of their homeland.

That night after supper at Om, I went to my unheated room to retire. Realizing for the first time that there were no sheets, blankets or quilts on the wooden cot, I put on all the clothes I could and crawled under what I couldn't, for autumn nights are cold at 6,050 feet.

The next day I spent in further exploration. Late in the afternoon I saw a number of women sweeping the road that leads to the temple and the Dalai Lama's residence. Since the other streets in Macleodganj were in much worse need of cleaning, I knew this wasn't just a routine. Then some women began to paint with whitewash a decorative border along both sides of the road.

The mystery was solved the following morning: the Dalai Lama was to perform a special *pūjā* (ritual worship) at the Gaden Choeling nunnery, and would be driven back to his quarters by jeep along that road. By the time I found this out he was already in the midst of worship at the convent. So I made my way there, hoping to get a glimpse of him. Along the way men were burning small bunches of deodar (Himalayan cedar) branches, whose white, fragrant smoke served in popular belief to purify the Dalai Lama's path. Crowds of men, women and children were standing on the road outside of the convent, because rumour had it that the Dalai Lama would shortly be visible as he went from one part of the convent to another. There was a sense of excitement and anticipation in the air as the crowd waited.

As I mentioned before, Tibetans don't share the same highly refined sense of personal purity with the Hindu. Standing beside me in the crowd was a middle-aged lama, and in front of him was a woman

holding her infant child. The kindly, intelligent-looking lama would hold up his rosary for the baby to grab at, trying to coax the child into playing with it. As the child would reach for it, the lama would lift it just beyond the child's grasp. After playing this game for a while, he let the child grab it and the child proceeded to stuff as much of it as possible into its toothless mouth. The lama thought this was great fun, and the baby's mother certainly felt her child blessed to have a holy man's rosary in its mouth.

Quite suddenly my attention was diverted from the rosary-eating child as the whole crowd began to vibrate with excitement—the Dalai Lama was walking between buildings, perhaps fifty yards from the road. People ran excitedly in different directions to get a view of him through the trees. They saluted him as he passed, and in a moment it was over. The crowd dispersed, and I was left amazed at how genuinely happy the people had been just to get a glimpse of their leader.

It might have been two hours later that people were again congregating, this time at the edge of town, where the road from the convent met the road going to the Dalai Lama's quarters—the area that had been swept, decorated, and purified with cedar smoke. More and more people crowded together to see the Dalai Lama ride by on his way from the convent to his quarters. No one knew for sure just when the *pūjā* would be over at the convent; as it turned out, we had quite a long wait.

After what seemed an eternity the clouds broke, releasing a torrent of rain; people stood back against the buildings and under anything that offered a little shelter from the downpour, but they didn't leave: nature couldn't chase them away. Suddenly, a wave of excitement passed over the end of the crowd towards the



'Beyond the monastery was the Dalai Lama's temple.'



'Inside, the main deity was Amitābha Buddha.'



*'MacLeodganj never ceased to fascinate.'*



*'...it was so full of colour and life.'*



His Holiness the Dalai Lama at Ewam Choding Tibetan Buddhist Center,  
Kensington, California (October 1979)



Library of Tibetan Works and Archives near Macleodganj



Tibetan Children's Village, near Macleodganj



"Tibetan children are especially beautiful." Tibetan Children's Village

convent and quickly spread over everyone. It was obvious that the Dalai Lama was coming. What I saw now was a most amazing sight. The people were trembling with excitement as a jeep sped past, the Dalai Lama barely visible in the back, waving his hand and smiling at the crowds that had gathered to salute him. It was over in five seconds. I've never seen anything like the reverence, adoration and prayer with which these people surround the living symbol of their faith. Later when I read the Dalai Lama's memoirs it wasn't difficult to visualize the scene when he said about his life in Tibet that 'the moment I prepared to go out, the word always went round and the whole of Lhasa turned up and lined the route to see me.'

Earlier I had asked an American in Tibetan monastic robes about arranging an audience with the Dalai Lama. Learning the procedure, I went to the Security Office of His Holiness the Dalai Lama in Macleodganj and signed up for a public audience. Whenever enough names should accumulate on the list, I was told, an audience would be arranged.

It doesn't take long to get sufficient names, because everyday busloads of people—mostly Westerners—pour into Macleodganj, which has become one of the most popular places to visit among foreigners in India. Most just come for a few days, but there are some that stay for months and even years. Some of those that stay long are serious students of the dharma—lay students as well as monks and nuns.

On the fourth morning of my stay I was told that an audience had been arranged, that I was to go at noon to the large gate opposite the temple which opens into the Dalai Lama's estate.

This was welcome news. The Dalai Lama was, before the Chinese occupation,

the temporal and spiritual leader of Tibet. Now he continues to lead and inspire the Tibetans in exile all over the world.

Among leaders of the world, he is unique. For he is considered not a mere mortal but the fourteenth in a succession of incarnations of Avalokiteśvara, the celestial Bodhisattva of compassion and tutelary deity of Tibet. The name of his palace in Lhasa is the Potala, that being the name of the deity's mythological home.

Though the lineage itself began in the fourteenth century, in 1642 the Fifth Dalai Lama received temporal power over the whole of Tibet. Whenever the reigning Dalai Lama would die, he would take birth in a new human form, so the belief went. Various occult as well as natural means were devised to find and test the new incarnation who, once confirmed, would be taken to Lhasa and educated until old enough to rule the government.

After the Thirteenth Dalai Lama passed away in 1933, the search for his new incarnation was begun. The story of how the present Dalai Lama was found at the age of two, though too long to narrate here, is fascinating.<sup>8</sup> By late 1939 the now four-year-old boy was taken to Lhasa. Whether or not there is any truth to the belief that he is the fourteenth in a continuous line of incarnations of Avalokiteśvara, one must admire the system that can produce such an outstanding leader. From the time he was an infant he received the most careful training and solicitude imaginable, and the whole nation bowed in reverence before him as a divine being. Yet, far from spoiling him, this left a man of deepest sincerity, compassion, purity and unusual openness of manner.

8. Two beautiful accounts are found in: His Holiness, the Dalai Lama, *My Land and My People* (New York: McGraw-Hill, 1962); and Noel Barber, *From the Land of Lost Content* (London: Collins, 1969).

Chiang Kai-Shek's government, even before the Communists came to power in China, denied in principle Tibetan autonomy, claiming that Tibet formed part of the Chinese nation. This, in spite of the fact that the native Tibetan government had been performing the functions of a sovereign state: issuing passports, signing international agreements, etc. After assuming power the Communists made the same claim over Tibet, and gradually began to do something about it.

Because of increasing Chinese interference and oppression in Tibet, the Dalai Lama was asked to take charge of the government from the regent while still a boy of sixteen—two years before his scheduled assumption of power. Alarmed at the prospect he protested, but finally 'I saw that at such a serious moment in our history, I could not refuse my responsibilities. I had to shoulder them, put my boyhood behind me, and immediately prepare myself to lead my country, as well as I was able, against the vast power of Communist China.'<sup>9</sup>

Because of his religious training he was opposed to all forms of violence. Besides, he knew that his country could never succeed at confrontation with the immense Chinese army. So for more than seven years he tried a policy of compromise and cooperation with the forces of occupation. By early 1959, however, it was obvious that his life was in danger. The Chinese weren't interested in compromise: they wanted control. His government told him time and again that he must go into exile, for if anything were to happen to his person, Tibet as a cultural entity would, they feared, be finished. Yet everything in his training told him that he could *not* die, that his body was a mere temporary vehicle for his indestructible spiritual being. That

being the case, he wanted to remain by his people in their suffering. So again and again he refused. He even wanted to go unaccompanied to the Chinese military headquarters in Lhasa and throw himself on their mercy, hoping thereby to spare his people bloodshed, though he knew that it might well be suicidal. His advisors naturally refused to allow it.

Finally, on March 17, 1959, when he saw that he would have to bow to his people's wish, he left Lhasa under the cover of night, in a blinding dust storm, disguised as an humble soldier. After a journey of two weeks through unimaginably difficult terrain over the roof of the world, sometimes negotiating passes of more than 19,000 feet, he crossed to safety in India.

It is true that there had been problems in Tibetan society. Tibet's was still a feudal society, with all the unjust distribution of wealth and power that feudalism implies. But it was also one of the most religious countries in the world: the whole of society was oriented towards religion, and every aspect of life was coloured by it. This had a moderating effect, reducing the oppression usually found in feudal societies, because Tibetan Buddhism stressed compassion above all other virtues.

Due to the central positions of religion in Tibetan life, monasteries enjoyed prestige and power. Almost every family would give at least one or two sons to the monastic life, and it is estimated that about ten percent of the population was monastic. This had led to some abuse of power: much of the wealth of the country was controlled by the large monasteries, while the common people were reduced to a sad state of poverty. The Thirteenth Dalai Lama was a very farsighted man who, it is said, predicted that if the wealthy families and the monasteries did not do

<sup>9</sup>. Dalai Lama, *My Land*, p. 83.

something to raise the lot of the common people, it would result in disaster. He instituted several reforms, and the present Dalai Lama, once he assumed power, recognized the social problems and began to seek various reforms. For he too had deep sympathy for the poor. In his memoirs he writes:

I have always been glad that I come from a humble family of peasants. I have always felt that if I had been born in a rich or aristocratic family I would not have been able to appreciate the feelings and sentiments of the humble classes of Tibetans. But owing to my lowly birth, I can understand them and read their minds, and that is why I feel for them so strongly and have tried my best to improve their lot in life <sup>10</sup>

But he had no time to effect the reforms he sought.

This is only the political and economic side, however. For the vast majority of the people, in spite of their poverty, had the deepest love for their country and its institutions, especially their monasteries. After the Dalai Lama fled his capital and was making his way to India, Lhasa witnessed a popular uprising in which men, women and children of all social strata—even the outcasted butchers—fought the occupying forces, though it was obvious from the start that they could never defeat the vastly superior Chinese army. So the uprising ended with thousands of Tibetans fleeing after the Dalai Lama into exile in India.

10. Ibid., p. 18.

True to its long history,<sup>11</sup> India gave refuge to the Dalai Lama and the thousands that followed after him. In time he was allowed to make Macleodganj, or Upper Dharamsala, the seat of his government-in-exile. Large tracts of land in various parts of India were given for resettlement of the refugees, and Macleodganj, though remaining small, naturally became the focus of them all. About 2,000 monks, nuns, and lay people came to make it their home in order to live in close proximity to their beloved leader.

As of 1980 a total of 48,927 refugees had been settled in India. Another 11,698 were yet to be settled. Thousands more had settled in Nepal and Bhutan. And many have gone to Europe, America and other countries, forming a true diaspora or 'dispersion' involving a total of about 1,00,000 Tibetans.

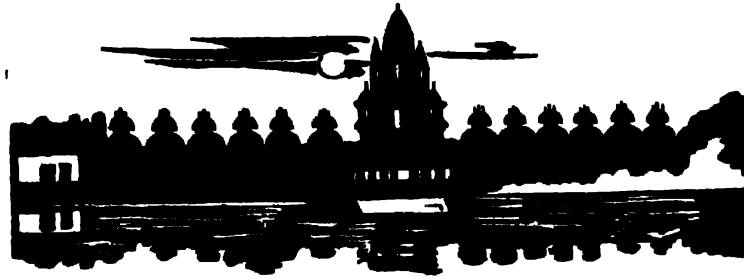
Since the beginning of their exile, the Dalai Lama has untiringly sought to preserve Tibetan cultural traditions and values among the refugee communities spread over the world. He hopes that one day he and his people may safely return to their homeland.

I was glad now that I would get a chance to meet the man about whom I had heard so much since I was a child, even though the meeting would only be in a brief public audience.

*(To be continued)*

11. There are several outstanding examples of persecuted groups like the Parsis and Jews finding refuge in India due to the natural and philosophic tolerance of the Hindus





## THE SYMBOLIC DIMENSION OF CHRISTIANITY

DR. M. AMALADOSS S. J.

[ The twenty million Christians of India are as much a part of the life and culture of the nation as the Hindus and Muslims are. Inculturation—giving an indigenous body to the soul of Christ's message—is one of the two problems that Indian Christian theologians are now trying to solve. The other problem, which arises from the religious pluralism of the land, is to orientate Christian monotheism and revelation to the religious beliefs of other religions. A solution to this problem from the semiological point of view is attempted in the following article, which originally appeared in the *Indian Theological Studies* vol. XIV No. 1, and is reproduced here by permission—Ed ]

Indian (Christian) theology is not primarily a translation in Indian idiom of an eternal and unchangeable body of truths. Theology is essentially a reflection over the Word of faith. An Indian theology would be a reflection on the Word in the context of India today, its preoccupations and its problems. Words like 'adaptation', 'inculturation' and even 'incarnation' do not bring out the creative and dynamic aspect of theologizing in the Indian context: 'adaptation' seems to imply something pre-existent that could be suitably dressed up, with minor alterations, in a new situation; though 'inculturation' seems to indicate a more dynamic process, culture is a vague term and often evokes an image of the archaic; 'incarnation' describes very well the principle, but does not bring out the continuing aspect of the action. A friend has suggested: 'contextualization'. The word is barbarous. But it seems to bring out the main thrust that should animate Indian theologians. Context would include, besides culture, the socio-economic-religious situation in an existential sense.

One element in the Indian context that has engaged the attention of theologians in India increasingly in recent years is the fact of religious pluralism and the need to find a meaning for it in the plan of God in the light of the Word. The plurality of religions was not a problem as long as Christianity was opposed to other religions as truth to falsehood or as legitimate to illegitimate. The problem would still be not so acute if one sees in the other religions only some good and holy elements that need to be rescued, so to speak, and assimilated. While these elements are acknowledged and 'judged' from one's own point of view the religions themselves can be conveniently ignored. The problem of religious pluralism becomes actual only when it is acknowledged that God communicates himself to man, not only in, and almost in spite of, other religions, but also through them, so that they can be really spoken of as ways to salvation. Such an understanding of other religions has grown in the recent past and has come to be

widely accepted by theologians in India today.<sup>1</sup>

Faced with this problem of the pluralism of religions two easy solutions seem unacceptable to me. One cannot adopt an agnostic attitude to other religions and behave as if they did not exist. No committed believer in any religion would either accept to look on all religions as different ways to the same goal, just as all the rivers lead to the same ocean. A third approach to a solution, generally accepted by Christians, has been the use of categories like less perfect—more perfect; promise—fulfilment, implicit—explicit etc. A certain sense of the superiority of Christianity has always accompanied this approach, as if salvation is surer and easier in Christianity than in other religions. I find this approach unacceptable. Religion is ultimately dependent on personal relationships—of man with God and with other men. Many from the East and the West will reach God's kingdom before the 'chosen' people get there—this is true of the new as of the old testament. 'Choice' by God is not a guarantee but a mission. However, it is not my purpose here to examine and criticize in detail the categories used by the third approach. Rather, I shall present my own approach and, perhaps, make a few critical remarks at the end if they are still needed.

### *The symbolic dimension*

I think that the notion of symbol is very helpful in explaining this and other similar problems. Let me first describe what I mean by the term symbol and then

show how it can be useful in understanding situations like the one described above.<sup>2</sup>

As soon as we hear the word symbol a host of images spring before our mind's eye. We see first of all *mathematical symbols*: for example,  $x, y, z$ . These stand for some known or unknown quantity. They stand for anything at all: persons, money, values, things, time etc. Secondly we have *linguistic signs*. These are conventional signs but not as arbitrary as mathematical symbols. In English the word 'cow' refers to an animal of a certain type. If one speaks English one has no choice except to use that word. But in French one will say 'vache'. There is no particular reason why that animal should be a 'cow' or a 'vache'. These terms are applied to the same type of animal by two different groups of people who refer to them in this way by a convention accepted and learnt when the language is learnt. When we say that smoke is a sign of fire we are speaking of an *index*, which is still another kind of symbol. Smoke is caused by fire. There is a material connection between smoke and fire: where there is smoke, there is fire. Therefore smoke indicates—points to—fire. That is why we call it an index. We also have *poetic symbols*, which are based on metaphoric relationships. If we say that fire is a symbol of love, it is because fire and love share a common quality, namely ardour. What makes fire a symbol is this quality, or way of being, identified by a man with

1. J. Neuner (Ed.), *Christian Revelation and World Religions* (London: 1967).

J. Pathrapankal (Ed.), *Service and Salvation* (Bangalore: 1973); D. S. Amalorpavadass (Ed.), *Research Seminar on Non-Biblical Scriptures* (Bangalore: 1974).

2. Cf for what follows J. R. Pierce, *Symbols, Signals and Noise: The Nature and Process of Communication* (New York: 1971); R. Barthes, *Elements of Semiology* (London: 1967); A. J. Greimas, *Du sens* (Paris: 1970); J. Kristeva, 'Le geste, pratique ou communication?', *Langage* 10 (1968), 48-64; G. Mounin, *Introduction à la semiologie* (Paris: 1970); F. de Saussure, *Cours de la linguistique generale* (Paris: 1968); M. Amaladoss, 'Religious Rite as Symbol', *Jeevadhara* 5 (1975) 319-328.

imagination. All these types of symbols and signs are used in the process of communication between men. Our normal talk about symbols, even in theology, hardly ever goes beyond these types.

### *The symbolic actions*

Yet there are a host of symbols that are very different. They are not merely communicative like the symbols listed above and sometime self-expressive like the poetic symbols. They are concrete and experiential. Let me take an example. I meet a friend on the road. I salute him with a *namaste*. It is a gesture that indicates an attitude of welcome, especially if it is accompanied by a smile. Suppose I hold his hand and press it—that is, shake hands: the pressure of my hand not merely communicates a message, but makes him *experience* welcome—feel the pleasure I have in seeing him again. More than that, it is a mutual, shared experience and expression of joy and love. It is not merely an intellectual experience, but a human one, including the physical dimension. We are not merely telling each other of our joy; we are not merely feeling it; we are not only expressing it in words and signs. We are linking it in a human way that involves our bodies too.

Let me briefly analyse this symbol. First of all it is not merely a symbol, but a *symbolic action*. It communicates a message of love and welcome. But it also *does* something more. It creates in both an experience. It creates an atmosphere of welcome, love etc. This is a simple gesture. But all social and religious rituals are such symbolic actions. Thus a banquet celebrates and creates community. A rite of initiation effectively makes one a member of the group. The rites accompanying a funeral reiterate social and kinship ties. The symbolic action is a *human* action. Man is a spirit in a body—or rather

enfleshed spirit. Whatever he does and experiences finds bodily expression. It is then that he finds a total way of being and acting. Language in itself abstracts, alienates. In universalizing its concepts, it disembodies them. But symbolic action enfleshes meaning; it concretizes concepts; it makes communication into a human experience. It is from this point of view, for instance, that we should find a new dimension in the mysteries of the incarnation—enfleshing of the Word—and of the Eucharist—the Lord becoming present to us in His body.<sup>3</sup> I shall say more of this later. The symbolic action is also a communal action. It is an action of a community that actualizes and concretizes interpersonal relationships. The person who is being initiated into a community enters into a set of new relationships with the others in the community of which he becomes a new member. He takes on a certain number of duties and obligations towards the group. These new relationships are ritually expressed and lived in the symbolic action.

What does this symbolic action symbolize? A great many things I would like to mention here four of them, the last of which is the most important for my purpose, but which can be fully grasped only in the context of the others. The first dimension that a symbolic action evokes is the actual life-situation of the community and all the social and cultural inter-relationships it involves. The ritual of marriage re-affirms kinship ties through the manner in which the various relatives contribute to and take part in the celebration. A rite of initiation, besides making one a new member, gives some idea of the kind of group of which he is becoming a member and the type of structure and

3. Terry Eagleton, *The Body as Language* (London: 1970); Sam Keen, *To a Dancing God* (New York: 1970).

interrelations that exist in it. The special teaching offered and the rituals see to this. A similar analysis of all the rituals may be made. Every ritual reflects in some way the social and cultural structures that animate the community that celebrates it.<sup>4</sup>

The second dimension that a symbolic action evokes is not contrary, but complementary, to the first. Rituals often manifest elements of anti-structure. For example, the image of the community that an observer would get while looking at certain types of rituals like pilgrimages to Pandarpur or Sabarimala, the Holi festival, the Eucharist etc is not the image of the community as it is and hence a faithful reflection of the current structures that make it function in view of the proximate goal it has set itself. It is rather the image of the community as it ought to be, or is called to be or would like to be. On these occasions taboos of all sorts, distinctions of caste and status seem to disappear and the idea of universal brotherhood seems to be asserted and lived ritually and experientially. This seems to be a clear affirmation of a dimension of reality that is ever present, though prevailing needs and structural distinctions make us forget it. There is also an element of hope in the future realization of this ideal community.<sup>5</sup>

It is in this context that a third dimension comes in, in the case of religious symbolic actions. The affirmation of an ideal community is made in terms of a religious faith, which makes the rituals open out to a transcendent dimension. Religious faith not only affirms this com-

munity as a future ideal but aims at creating it here and now. An example would make the elements of this third dimension clear. Initiation rites in most societies not only make the individual a member of a community; they also confer on him fellowship with the gods. Baptism not only makes the recipient a member of the Church, but also a child of God through a rebirth in the Spirit. Similarly the Eucharist is not only a symbol of community and brotherhood lived and manifested in a common meal; it is also a communion with God and a sharing of his divine life which brings together the community sharing the meal. It is this religious dimension that is often the basis of the anti-structural elements spoken of in the previous paragraph.

The fourth dimension of meaning of communal symbolic actions, and the most important one for my purpose here, is its representative character. Let me start with an example. A man and a woman, happily married, love each other. This mutual love animates their whole life. It finds expression in a variety of ways, a loving look, a caressing touch, an affectionate word; in the work the man does for supporting himself and his family and in the household jobs that occupy the woman; in their companionship, mutual appreciation, self-sacrifice for each other etc etc. There are a thousand ways in which love is manifested, expressed and experienced. All these are symbolic. But the act of love is something special. It is a pure and simple expression of love. It is not love expressed through some other type of activity. It is love itself in act. It involves the whole person body and soul—a total self-gift. It is sensible because it involves all the senses. In it love acquires a visibility and becomes tangible. It is representative: it is not the only act expressive of love, while other acts are not so expressive. It expresses it in a particular way: it is some-

4. C. Levi-Strauss, 'Introduction a l'oeuvre de Marcel Mauss', *Sociologie et anthropologie* by Marcel Mauss (Paris 1968); Mary Douglas, *Natural Symbols* (Pelican: 1973).

5. V. Turmes, *The Ritual Process. Structure and Anti-Structure* (London: 1969); Idem., 'Pilgrimage and Communitas', *Studia Missionalia* 23 (1974) 1-23.

how related directly to love itself. Yet it has no claims to exclusivity. It sensibilizes an experience that is ever present in every little act. Love expressed in an act of sacrifice or experienced in a moment of separation may be deeper and stronger. The act of love need not be the high-point of the experience of love. It need not be superior to or more authentic than other expressions of love. But its expression is specific, in the way described above. Let me retain then two characteristics of this special symbolic action (1) It gives a particular expression to an experience that is constant, and extends beyond the particular act both in space and in time. In this it is not exclusive, but representative. (2) Secondly, at the level of expression, though there may be a thousand ways of expressing love in symbolic actions, this is a particular, specific one. This specificity is in the order of expression and not in the order of intensity of experience. Both these characteristics make it symbolic of all the other symbolic expressions of love. Like the tip of the iceberg indicating the great mass submerged below the water level, it points to, in its visibility, a reality that may be lived and expressed in a great variety of ways, more or less adequate from a symbolic point of view.

### *Sacraments as symbols*

The sacraments are precisely the kind of symbolic actions I am talking about. Normally when we talk of them as symbols we think mostly of the spiritual dimension. Recently we have started talking about their social or communitarian dimension. I think we should now begin talking of their place in the totality of Christian life. Taking the sacrament of initiation as an example it is not enough to look upon it as a symbol of rebirth in the Spirit, making one a son of God. It is more than an

admission into the Church, the body of believers in Christ. It is a living expression of a reality of rebirth, of dying and rising that is happening continuously throughout one's lifetime. This continuing renewal finds living expressions in his life in a multitude of ways. All these actions are symbolic. The rite of initiation symbolizes and indicates all these by visibilizing symbolically the process of rebirth as such and not as indicated by some other reaction.

This dimension comes out much more clearly in the Eucharist. The Eucharist symbolizes communion of life. It is a sharing in the life of God given to us in Jesus Christ. This sharing unites all those who participate in it into a community. Communion in love and life either with God or with others is not an exclusive feature of the Eucharist. We can express our love for God and unite ourselves to Him in a variety of ways through prayer and good works. But in the Eucharist God comes near to us in His own incarnate body. We have remarked above that it is through the body that the closest union can be achieved, between human beings. In the Eucharist God comes to us in a body, and that too as food, so that a real and total assimilation and identification is possible. Similarly our love for our neighbour may find expression in the smallest act of love, of help, of service. But what union can be closer than the union of two in the love and life of God himself—like two branches of the same vine? Thus we see that the Eucharist is a special way of living and expressing a reality that is coextensive with Christian life. Note that I am not saying that our union with Christ and with the other is deeper and more intense than in other circumstances of life. Christ may be encountered as intensely and authentically in a poor and a suffering person as in the

Eucharist. But the way in which the encounter takes place is different in each case and the way of the Eucharist stands apart. The Eucharistic banquet is a symbolic expression of communion pure and simple, not mediated by any other symbolic action. Helping some one in need, for example, is directly symbolic of an attitude of service, which indicates or involves love. But sharing a meal—not feeding a hungry brother—is simply an expression of fellowship, communion and love. This is why, it can be symbolic of all other ways of expressing love, more or less indirectly. The love is the same, but the ways in which it finds expression are many and one of them is particular, unique, specific. The perfection of love or the intensity of the experience does not depend on the ways in which it is lived and expressed. An experience through a more expressive symbol need not necessarily be a deeper experience. I am repeating this idea because of the constant tendency in the past to confuse levels of experience and expression and to be liberal with value judgements like more—less, perfect—imperfect, present—absent etc.

### *Symbolic dimension of Christianity*

It is in the context of the notion of symbolic action and its various dimensions of meaning that I would like to understand the problem of the pluralism of religions. No serious theologian today would think of Christianity as the only true religion while the other religions are false. No true believer would look upon Christianity just as one among many religions. I would be also hesitant to assent that in the order of life and experience Christianity is better, more perfect, superior, easier, more effective etc. I think that the specificity of Christianity lies in its symbolic character with regard to other religions.

In the light of what I have been saying above regarding symbols and symbolic actions, this brief affirmation regarding the symbolic character of Christianity with regard to other religions should be expanded and understood in the following manner. The saving act of God or God's loving self-communication to man has no limits either in space or in time. It is universal (1 Tim. 2,4). The Spirit of God is present and active everywhere and at all times. The liberation achieved by Christ's resurrection is for all men. This liberation is actually operative in the world through a whole variety of symbolic actions. Some of these may belong to different religious traditions. Others may be 'secular': action for human development and liberation are recognized today as integral aspects of evangelization (cf Mt 25, 31-46). Christianity, from one point of view, is one of the symbolic ways through which God's love becomes present to man and active in man. It has no claims to exclusivity. Many non-Christians are saved in and through their religions. Let me clarify, in passing, that the saving act is one and the same; only the symbolic mediations of this action are different. While the symbolic action that is Christianity is not exclusive, it remains something special. This speciality is made up of two factors. First of all the saving presence of God in Christ and in the Spirit becomes visible and tangible not merely in some indirect, though symbolic, way. It becomes visible and sensible in them, directly. Every way is symbolic, because it is human. But the symbolization in Christianity is direct while in other religions it is indirect. The distinction is applicable within Christianity itself. It is the same Christ one encounters when one gives a cup of water to a thirsty person and when one participates in the Eucharistic banquet. But Christ is not present to him in the same way. In both

cases his presence is symbolic—mediated by symbol. In the first case it is the thirsty person. In the second case it is the sacrament of the body and blood of Christ and the community. But in the second case Christ is present in a unique way. He is there himself, with his body. He is not more present here than elsewhere. But the mode of his presence is different. That is why within Christianity itself the sacraments, and especially the Eucharist, are specific symbolic actions—they are Christianity-in-act. The same distinction holds good between Christianity and other religions. If we look only upon the symbolic actions of ordinary Christian life, these are not very different from similar symbolic actions in other religions. What is specific to Christianity is the direct, though still symbolic, way in which the mystery of God's self-communication in Christ and the Spirit becomes present to us. It would perhaps help to look back to the analogy of the act of love to understand what I am trying to say.

The second of the two factors that make up the specificity of Christianity is related to the first. Because of the special direct relationship that exists between experience and expression in the symbolic action that is Christianity, it becomes symbolic of all other not so direct (symbolic) expressions of the same experience. The mystery that is present everywhere and at all times, finding expression in a multitude of ways, has become itself visible, tangible, sensible.

To repeat again what we have been saying in other contexts: *this specificity of Christianity does not by itself make it a better, superior, surer, or easier way to God.*

There is nothing new or original in saying that Christianity is sacramental or symbolic. What is new is the use of this concept to understand and explain the

relationship of Christianity to other religions. Normally the term sacrament is used only to explain the relationship through symbolic action between God and man. I am using the same term to explain the interrelationship between different symbolic actions expressive of the same experience, one of which stands apart from the others at the level of experience.

### *Christ as symbol*

What I have said here about Christianity has christological implications. I cannot go into them here in great detail. But a few indications would not be out of place. When we usually speak of Christ as sacrament we think only of his symbolic mediation of our relationship to God. Christ is the sacrament of God. Many nuances will now have to be introduced. 'Christ' is no longer a simple concept. We speak today of the historical Jesus and the Christ of faith; we talk of the Christ of history and the cosmic Christ or the Christ of mystery. All these terms refer to the same person, but not to the same dimension of his personality and action. When we normally speak of Christ in relation to Christianity we speak of the Christ who was born in the flesh, living today. How does he relate to the cosmic Christ? He is the same person, to be sure. But we have to do with two different dimensions linked in some way to the two natures of traditional theology. The relations between these two dimensions will remain as much a mystery as the relation between the two natures, namely the mystery of the incarnation itself. But in the light of my argument above regarding the Eucharist and Christianity, correspondingly I would say that the Christ of history is the symbol of the Christ-mystery. The word symbol, of course, is to be understood in the rich sense I have given to it above. In the life

and action of the man Jesus the mystery of Christ present and active everywhere and at all times (Eph. 1,3-10) becomes visible, tangible, sensible. It is a living expression of the Christ-mystery—a particular and specific expression. The unknown Christ is active everywhere and manifests himself in a great variety of symbols. But he becomes humanly and bodily present and active in Jesus Christ. Jesus Christ, therefore, is symbolic not only of man's relationship to God, but also of the multitudinous other expressions of the same mystery everywhere and all times.

### *Conclusion*

In a situation of religious pluralism we were first accustomed to speaking in terms of true/false, presence/absence etc. Then we began speaking in terms of more/less, perfect/imperfect, preparation/fulfilment etc. These approaches do not really take into account all the facts. I am suggesting the category of symbol. Taken in a purely objective, physical sense, the

concept of symbol is empty and can be of no use in this context. But understood in a human and personal way as symbolic action, it seems to suggest a new way of posing the problem and of looking for solution. I think that the term symbolic action translates into contemporary terminology the idea of 'first fruits' in the Bible. This relationship needs to be explored. The close relationship between Jesus Christ, Christianity and the Eucharist in terms of expression—experience is also remarkable. We cannot really speak of the one without the other. The symbolic dimension with its stress on expression goes beyond a mere cognitive differentiation in terms of explicit/implicit, known/unknown. The tradition of scholasticism has been too much occupied with essences and has not paid sufficient attention to different ways of being, of living and of experiencing. Once the importance of the ways of experiencing a reality is understood no one would ask, 'if salvation is available to every one why should any one be a Christian?'

### *(Continued from page 109)*

neglected to develop its myth further in the course of the centuries. Those who gave expression to the dark stirrings of growth in mythic ideas were refused a hearing; Meister Eckhart, Jacob Boehme and many others who have remained obscurantists for the majority.<sup>13</sup>

Jung pays high encomiums to the East and specially to India. But he feels that the West has its own spiritual heritage and, instead of copying the East, must evolve its own Yoga. Speaking of Yoga, Jung says :

In the East, where these ideas and practices originated and where an uninterrupted tradition extending over some four thousand years have created the necessary spiritual conditions, yoga is, as I can readily believe, the perfect and appropriate method of fusing body and mind together

so that they form a unity that can hardly be doubted. The Indian can forget neither the body nor the mind, while the European is always forgetting either the one or the other. The Indian not only knows his own nature, but he knows also how much he himself is nature. When the yogi says, 'prāna' he means very much more than mere breath. For him the word prāna brings with it the full weight of its metaphysical components, and it is as if he really knew what prāna meant in this respect. He does not know it with his understanding, but with his heart, belly and blood. The European only imitates and learns by rote, and is therefore incapable of expressing his subjective facts through Indian concepts. I do regard this spiritual achievement of the East as one of the greatest things the human mind has ever created.<sup>14</sup>

13. *ibid.*, p. 306.

14. Carl G. Jung, *Psychology and Religion*, Pp. 533, 536, 537.





## EMERSON, AUTHOR OF AMERICA'S LITERARY INDEPENDENCE

DR DONALD SZANTHO HARRINGTON

As Thomas Jefferson was the principal drafter of the American Declaration of Independence, Ralph Waldo Emerson was the author of America's literary and intellectual independence, and a major force behind the movement for religious reformation in this land.

Emerson's life falls simply and naturally into four parts :

(1) A period of preparation, including his early Unitarian ministry, stretching for twenty nine years, from 1803 to 1832.

(2) The period of his definitive work, as a scholar, essayist, poet, public lecturer, controversialist, conversationalist, philanthropist, gentleman farmer and friend to the friends of man, a period of eighteen years, from 1832 to 1850.

(3) The third period continued and developed the second in that he continued a heavy schedule of writing, publishing and lecturing, but became far more of an activist, especially in relation to the crusade to abolish slavery. This was from 1850, with the passing of the Fugitive Slave Law, through the period of the Civil War and the era of Reconstruction, down to 1872.

(4) The fourth and last period was one of clear sailing and slow decline, in which he was universally lauded and loved as the

Oracle of America, the Sage of Concord, from 1872 to 1882 when he died at the age of seventy-nine.

Now let us examine these four periods of his life more closely to find the events and ideas which gave his life its formative and lasting force.

### *Background*

Ralph Waldo Emerson was born in Boston on Election Day, May 5th, 1803. His father, Rev. William Emerson, who was the minister of the First Church in Boston, and a Unitarian, was also a man of considerable public involvement, member of the School Committee of Boston and half a dozen other organizations of public welfare, as well as Chaplain of State Senate and Council, and along with this editor of a magazine, *The Monthly Anthology*. Hurrying home from the Governor's House, he discovered that his wife, Ruth, had given birth to their fourth child, whom they named Ralph Waldo.

Emerson's mother was a woman of some family distinction. As a child George Washington had bounced her on his knee when a visitor at her father's home. The William Emersons lived adequately, but not well, and always had financial problems.

But Ralph was sent to Boston Latin School to start his education.

In 1811 disaster struck the large family in the sudden death of the father, and thereafter mother and children either boarded with relatives or friends, or for a time Ruth ran a boarding house to keep them all together. His aunt Mary Moody Emerson spent considerable time with them, helping out with the work, and used the opportunity to impress upon young Ralph the importance of maintaining an independent, critical spirit, questioning all things. She was later to feel that she had succeeded all too well. He became far more intellectually radical than she desired. But the early years were not easy for them. One winter Ralph and Edward had to share a coat.

In 1821, young Ralph graduated from Harvard College, thirtieth in a class of fifty-nine. He was not elected Phi Beta Kappa till seven years later, when he received the degree as an honorary degree. While at Harvard, however, he had not only absorbed the traditional subjects, but read widely and became deeply interested in the religious books of India and China. This was partly through the influence of Aunt Mary Moody Emerson as well. He also had begun to read some of the higher criticism of the Bible and to be sceptical of its supernatural claims.

### *Harvard Divinity School*

For the next four years he taught school, his health being not very robust. The whole family, like so many in those days, suffered from incipient tuberculosis. But he became more and more interested in becoming a minister like his father. In 1825 he entered Harvard Divinity School, and in 1826 was licensed to preach, preaching his first sermon on October 15, 1826, at his Uncle Dr. Samuel Ripley's church, the old First Parish in Waltham, which just happens to be the church indeed the very building in which

I grew up as a child. My great grandfather Charles was one of Samuel Ripley's parishioners.

### *Ellen Tucker*

In 1827, while visitor-preaching at Concord, New Hampshire, he met a lovely seventeen year old girl, Ellen Tucker, and they fell in love with each other. But he had not yet finished school, and she was ill with consumption. They decided to wait to be married while he finished school and she recovered her health. They saw each other frequently, and wrote constantly.

In 1829, he was ordained and called to be minister of the Second Church (Unitarian) in Boston, and, like his father before him, invited to become Chaplain of the Senate to serve on the School Committee, both of which responsibilities he accepted. At this time he wrote in his journal: 'I fear nothing now except the preparation of sermons! The prospect of one each week for an indefinite time to come is almost terrifying.'

In 1830, he married Ellen, whom he idolized and worshipped, but within just four months she died. He was utterly stricken and inconsolable, but paradoxically Ellen was the means of his leaving the ministry and taking up the role of free lance lecturer, writer and gentleman farmer, for she left him an inheritance which, while not great, none the less gave him income equal to half to two thirds of his regular salary as a minister. Thus Ellen was many times, a blessing to Emerson all the rest of his life. She gave him his first love, and a degree of financial independence, without which it might have been impossible to do what he did, or to make the contribution he was to make.

### *Early sermons*

In his early sermons, Emerson tried out on his congregation the great themes which were to characterize later on his public phil-

osophy and famous essays and lectures—transcendentalism, self-reliance, self-reverence, compensation. In a sermon against false pride, he said, 'The good man reveres himself, reveres his conscience, and would rather suffer any calamity than lower himself in his own esteem.' In another, he said, that the moral sense perceiver of right and wrong, was a sovereign part of man's nature and existed in the mind independently of his experience. In another he declared that heaven is not in the future, but right here and now. Jesus, he said, derived his authority from truths he uttered. The humblest person teaching the same truths, he said, would be vested with the same authority.

These were far from orthodox Christian, or even orthodox unitarian, ideas, but his people were excited by them. 'A trust in yourself,' he said, 'is the height, not of pride but of piety, an unwillingness to learn from any but God himself.' But for the self to be trusted, like this, its origin must be perceived, its origin in deity.

He called in for his witnesses not only great Christians, but, many non-Christians, saying their authority derived from the divinity of all men. 'Moses and Socrates and Confucius and Fenelon', he said, 'think the same thing. Justice, love, purity, truth are intelligible to all men. and have a friend in the bottom of the heart of every man.' His people, though astonished, heard him gladly.

#### *Emerson leaves the ministry*

All the more sad were they when he began to show a restiveness with the ministry. He disliked having to consider whether he might be going too far when he spoke his whole heart to his congregation. He saw harsh resistance to the new Transcendentalist ideas. In his Journal he noted that he found little love, 'at the bottom of these great religious shows; ...' 'Calvanism stands,' he wrote, 'by pride and ignorance;

and Unitarianism stands by the opposition of Calvanism.' He wanted something fresh and new and positive that he felt burning within, and somehow felt imprisoned in the institution of the church. In September of 1832, against the advice of both his mother and Aunt Mary, he told his congregation he could no longer administer the rite of the Lord's Supper, and as he felt they wished to continue the practice of it, he resigned his pulpit. This was not really an abandonment either of the church or of the pulpit, for he continued to preach at other churches as a supply preacher for the next eight years, and remained an interested, if irregular, Unitarian churchman for the rest of his life. But it did end his active leadership of a parish, and brought to a close the first period of his life.

#### *Essayist and lecturer*

The second period, from 1833 to 1850, during which Emerson would do his greatest work and make his irrevocable contribution, was begun with a year in Europe, during which he met and began life-long friendships with many of the great men and women of England and the Continent, especially Wordsworth and Carlyle. He travelled everywhere, saw everyone worth seeing, but came home convinced that America must create out of her own life and indigenous materials a literary culture of her own. He was determined to be a leader in this. It provoked one of his most familiar poems :

Goodbye, proud world! I'm going home.  
Thou art not my friend, and I'm not thine.  
Long through thy weary crowds I roamed,  
A river-arc on the ocean brine,  
Long I've been tossed like the driven foam,  
But now, proud world! I'm going home.  
Oh, when I am safe in my sylvan home,  
I tread on the pride of Greece and Rome;  
And when I am stretched beneath the pines,  
Where the evening star so holy shines;  
I laugh at the lore and the pride of man,  
At the sophist schools and the learned clans;

For what are they all, in their high conceit,  
When man in the bush with God my meet?

### *Coolidge castle*

Not too long after his return, he moved with his mother out to Concord town where his father's family had come from, and where his uncle, Dr. George Ripley, was the Unitarian Minister. At first they boarded with his uncle at the Old Manse, but later he was to buy the old Coolidge farm down on the road to Cambridge, which I have driven past many a time and visited myself—it is still there—where he established himself in a kind of ideal existence as a gentleman farmer, scholar, lecturer, spending his mornings in the study and his afternoons in his garden, or planting fruit trees, or conversing with visitors, or walking through the woods to Walden Pond or along the banks of the Concord River with his literary friends. The old Coolidge Place became familiarly known in later years as 'The Bush' (where man and God may meet), or perhaps more commonly as *Coolidge Castle*, because so many visitors came to partake of its open and warm hospitality, sometimes being put up at Emerson's expense for weeks.

Now the stream of his thought, fed by daily experience and contemplation, by wide reading, correspondence and conversation, became a rushing river. His method was to jot down his ideas and reaction at random in his Journal each day, then translate these into lectures or essays as required. With ever-increasing invitations to lecture at lyceums all over New England, and ever-increasing popularity, his intellectual current gathered force and power.

### *Lydia Jackson and bereavement*

Some years earlier, he had noticed while preaching at a Congregational Church in Boston, an attractive young woman who

seemed to be listening to every word he spoke. Later he saw her again in Plymouth at the Lyceum, and again on Sunday at the Unitarian Church. Lydia Jackson was introduced to him, and he found himself looking for excuses to go to Plymouth. He proposed by mail, was accepted by mail, and they were married in 1835. Waldo and Lidian, as he insisted upon calling her, were kindred spirits, and she, a generous-hearted and practical, as well as highly intelligent young woman, was for him a perfect help-mate, lover and home manager.

But these were not years without sorrow, for in 1834 his brother, Edward, died, and in 1835 his favourite, younger brother, Charles, whom everyone in the family thought of as the one most full of promise of them all, died, both of consumption.

Almost as if to assuage his grief, there came along in 1836 his first born son, 'Little Waldo', as they called him. Lidian wrote to her sister: 'I feel as if a volume might be filled before one could duly set forth all that this child is to him, both as possession and hope.' When little Waldo died five years later of scarlet fever, Emerson was inconsolable. But in 1839, his first daughter had been born. Lidian insisted upon naming her Ellen, after his beloved first wife, which says a lot for Lidian! In 1841 a second daughter, Edith, was born. And in 1844, another son, whom they named Edward Waldo. All of these were to live rich and full, long lives.

### *On Nature and Man*

Now Emerson's ideas began to have real impact. His first book, which appeared in 1836, on *Nature*, began with a natural science approach, but moved quickly to affirm the divine in nature and human nature; the first edition sold out in thirty days.

Self-reliance and non-conformity were the great themes; and the need for free and

independent thought, and the concept of truth as always becoming.

Trust thyself; every heart vibrates to that iron string. Accept the place of Divine Providence has found for *you*, the society of your contemporaries, the connection of events. Great men have always done so, and confided themselves childlike to the genius of their age, betraying their perception that the absolutely trustworthy were seated at their heart, working through their hands, predominating in all their being. And we are now men, and must accept in the highest mind the same transcendent destiny; and not minors and invalids in a protected corner, not cowards fleeing before a revolution, but guides, redeemers and benefactors, obeying the Almighty effort and advancing on Chaos and the Dark.

Whoso would be a man, must be a non-conformist. He who would gather immortal palms must not be hindered by the name of goodness, but must explore if it be goodness. Nothing is at last sacred but the integrity of your own mind.

What I must do is all that concerns me, not what the people think. This rule, equally arduous in actual and intellectual life, may serve for the whole distinction between greatness and meanness. It is easy in the world to live after the world's opinion; it is easy in solitude to live after our own; but the great man is he who in the midst of the crowd keeps with perfect sweetness the independence of solitude.

Taking this rule seriously, one might at times appear inconsistent. Some called Emerson inconsistent, and indeed he was, frequently so. But he had the answer to such complaints: 'A foolish consistency is the hobgoblin of little minds,' he said 'adored by little statesmen and philosophers and divines. With consistency a great soul has simply nothing to do. Speak what you think now in hard words, and tomorrow speak what tomorrow thinks in hard words again, though it contradict everything you said today.'

To every human being he said, be your own, unique self, not someone else. Aim high!

Our culture has truckled to the times—to the senses. It is not man-worthy. If the vast and

spiritual are omitted, so are the practical and the moral. It does not make us brave or free. We teach boys to be such men as we are. We do not teach them to aspire to be all they can. We do not give them a training as if we believed in their noble nature. We scarce educate their bodies. We do not train the eye and the hand. We exercise their understandings to the apprehension and comparison of some facts, to a skill in numbers, in words; we aim to make accountants, attorneys, engineers; but not to make able, earnest, great-hearted men. The great object of education should be commensurate with the object of life. It should be a moral one; to teach self-trust to inspire the youthful man with an interest in himself, with a curiosity touching his own nature; to acquaint him with the resources of his mind, and to teach him that there is all his strength, and to inflame him with a piety towards the Great Mind in which he lives. Thus would education conspire with the Divine Providence. A man is a little thing whilst he works by and for himself, but, when he gives voice to the rules of love and justice is Godlike, his world is current in all countries, and all men, though his enemies, are made his friends and obey it as their own.

There comes a moment in the education of every man when he becomes convinced that envy is ignorance, that imitation is suicide, and that he must take and be himself for better or for worse.

### *Two greatest addresses*

Emerson's two greatest addresses, the ones which establish his reputation as a great literary figure and controversialist were the Phi Beta Kappa address in Cambridge in 1837, and the Divinity School address at Harvard Divinity School in 1838.

In the first, he declared America's literary independence of Europe, and called for a truly American literature. He tied scholarship and literary craftsmanship to life, and most specifically American life and experience: 'Our day of dependence, our long apprenticeship to the learning of other lands draws to a close,' he proclaimed. 'Let the single man plant himself indomitably upon his instincts and there abide, and the huge world will come round to him.' Oliver

Wendell Holmes called it 'Our intellectual Declaration of Independence.' James Russell Lowell described the scene: 'What crowded and breathless aisles, what windows clustering with eager heads, what enthusiasm of approval, what grim silence of foregone dissent.'

In the Divinity School address, he scandalized the professors by claiming that the Gospel writers had failed to understand what Jesus was saying and doing, namely illustrating that the divine can become incarnate in man. The world, he said, was a marvel of perfection, but when the mind revealed the universal laws, the world shrank into mere illustration and fable of this mind. The perfection of the laws suggested that only one world, one mind was everywhere active, the supreme law. Perception of it awakened in the individual the religious sentiment, divine and deifying. Jesus understood this, experienced it, and said, 'I am divine; through me God acts; through me speaks.' But this doctrine was distorted by those who came after him who thought he was saying that he was Jehovah come down out of heaven. They made Christianity into a myth, not a doctrine of the soul.

The address was followed by a great hue and cry. Uncle Samuel Ripley, commenting on the criticism of Emerson, said: 'The whole band of clergymen have raised their voice against him, with a very few exceptions; and the common people, even women, look solemn and sad, and roll up their eyes... "Oh, he is a dangerous man"; the church is in danger; Unitarianism is disgraced; the party is broken up...' Emerson met their taunts and cries with equanimity, suggesting that all innovators face this kind of response and indicating that they sounded all ridiculously stale and old to him. 'I have a great deal more to say that will shock you out of all patience,' he said.

#### *Lectures and essays*

These years were crowded with important

events in Emerson's life. He lectured to wider and wider spheres, travelling farther and farther away from Concord.

In 1841 the first volume of his essays on Self-Reliance, Compensation, Love, Friendship, The Oversoul, etc. appeared; and in 1844 the second volume. In 1842 and 43 for a time he edited the Dial.

It was during this period that he made the long-lasting friendships which were to have such a deep effect upon his own thought and life, especially with Bronson Alcott to whom he was devoted despite his idiosyncrasies, the young poet Ellery Channing, who never lived up to his promise, Henry Thoreau, Margaret Fuller, and the Englishman Carlyle.

He turned his mind to social questions, studying Fourier, and visiting Brook Farm and Fruitlands. But social issues never took a primary place in his interest. He wanted 'a more fundamental reform,' a new man.

In 1845 he let Thoreau build a cabin on land which he had bought on the north shore of Walden Pond, one of his unknowing, great gifts to mankind, for out of Thoreau's residence in that cabin came *Walden*.

#### *His poems*

Emerson wished with all his heart to be a poet, but prose was his medium. As Margaret Fuller said: 'His powers are mostly philosophical, which is not the truest kind of poetry.' Speaking of his poems, she said, 'They want the simple force of natural passion, and ... fail to wake far-off echoes in the heart.'

None the less, many of his poems are perfectly superb in style and expression.

Emerson at this time of his life was described in his lecturing as standing tall and thin, 'a luminous, friendly expression revealing an unusual combination of sensitiveness and self-control' on his face. 'His voice, his delivery, his very carelessness of his audience, his indifference as to whether

they understood him or not, seem to become endeared to one as forming part of the individual Emerson, whose thoughtful pathway lies alone through the mental world.'

### *Again to Europe*

In 1847, he spent another year in England and on the Continent, this time lecturing and being lionized everywhere he went. He met Dickens, Tennyson, Macaulay, George Sand, Leigh Hunt, Thackeray, de Toqueville, Matthew Arnold, Arthur Hugh Clough, and many others. Sixteen years later Matthew Arnold wrote him: 'I look back with great satisfaction to have made your personal acquaintance while you were here ... and I can never forget the refreshing and guiding effect your writings had upon me at a critical time of my life.'

Shortly after Emerson's return to Concord, his mother died at the age of eighty-four, having lived with him all of his married life. It says a lot for their relationship, and the kind of multi-generation family they maintained at Coolidge Castle, that he noted in his diary after she was gone that there was one less room to go for sane society in this house.

### *The abolition of slavery*

In 1850, the passage of the Fugitive Slave Law aroused Emerson to more concerted social action than he had ever thought he would permit himself to be involved in. He had considered group action likely to undercut the integrity of the individual soul. But he could not abide slavery, nor Daniel Webster's compromise with it. 'I will not obey it, by God,' he said of the Fugitive Slave Law. Of slavery, he said in an address to his townsmen, 'Root it out, burn it up, pay for the damage, and let's have done with it.' Buy the freedom of the slaves, he counselled, whatever the cost, and let us 'Dig away this accursed mountain of sorrow once and forever out of the world.'

He lectured against slavery as far as Missouri and down into Kentucky. He wrote Theodore Parker in 1855, 'We all love and honour you here, and have come to think of every drop of your blood and every moment of your life as a national value. Ever new strength and victory to you!'

He met John Brown and presented him to his townfolk at Concord. After his arrest, he predicted that 'His martyrdom, if perfected, will make the gallows as glorious as the cross.'

### *Commendation of Walt Whitman*

It was in 1855, also, that he received a copy of an unknown young poet's just published work from New York, Walt Whitman's *Leaves of Grass*, and gave it high praise. This praise from the famed sage of Concord helped Whitman substantially to make his way as a poet, and he was forever after grateful to Emerson for it.

Throughout the Civil War, he spoke and worked for the Union cause, and in 1862 went to lecture in Washington, D.C. and was taken to see Lincoln twice, by both Secretary Seward and Senator Sumner. He rejoiced in Lincoln's Emancipation Proclamation.

1869 found him teaching a course at Harvard, and in 1870 he went by train all the way to California.

In 1872 Coolidge Castle burned, but most of his books and papers were saved, and also most of the furnishings of the house. People spontaneously sent money, more than eighteen thousand dollars, and the house was rebuilt.

This brings us to the fourth and last period of Emerson's life. While the house was being rebuilt, he went once more to Europe and all the way to Egypt, travelling with his daughter Ellen, who had become almost his secretary-companion. But he was beginning to suffer lapses of memory, and was glad when the time came once more

to return home. A grand reception awaited his return. The streets of Concord had been especially decorated and garlanded. Green arches had been set up, and the railroad train bringing him from Boston tied its whistle down all the way in from Walden Pond to the Concord station to announce his coming. He slipped back into the old, happy life very easily in his new, rebuilt farm-home.

Now, he was coasting. People came to meet him by the hundreds, some just to sit for a while in his benevolent presence. He was the Sage of Concord, the American oracle. He continued to do some lectures, but had frequent lapses when he couldn't find his place. But still the demands for him poured in, and, with Ellen's help, he tried to respond. It was enough, many said, if he would only come himself and read to them the words long since familiar. But he was finding it harder and harder to continue.

In 1879 and 1880 he attended the Annual Meetings of the Unitarian Association at Boston, probably because Ellen wished him to do so. In 1881 he gave his last public lecture to the Massachusetts Historical Society, on Carlyle.

Robert Collyer, Minister of our own church here in New York City, visited him that year, and said that he communed with him as with 'one in a dream'. Whitman came, and John Burroughs, to sit for a while in his presence.

### *At the end*

In April of 1882, while out on one of his long daily rambles, he was caught in a sudden shower and wet through. He came down with pneumonia and his tired, old body, almost in its eightieth year, could not throw it off. At the end, the image of 'little Waldo', forty years dead, seemed to come back to him, and his last words were, 'Oh, that beautiful boy!'

As the word of his passing spread through Concord town, the people poured into the streets, and the church belled seventy-nine times, once for each year of his life. The following Sunday, after a memorial service at the Unitarian Church, his neighbours followed the casket with his body to its resting place beside Hawthorne and Thoreau and others of the famous whom he had eulogized, in Sleepy Hollow Cemetery on the high ridge watching over the town, where it remains today, marked by a large granite boulder.

### *Emerson's message*

The elements in Emerson's message that come through unerringly still today are his emphasis upon absolute individual freedom of belief, and the integrity of the individual conscience in its search for truth and right. He would have approved of a poem E. E. Cummings, contemporary Unitarian poet, wrote, called *Be Yourself*.

to be nobody but yourself  
in a world which is doing  
its best day and night to  
make you everybody else  
means to fight the hardest  
battle which any  
human being can  
fight and never  
stop fighting

Yes, Emerson would have agreed with that

He professed a discipleship to advancing truth. 'Truth' he once said, 'never is; it is always becoming'

He believed that all men could know God by direct, personal experience, by virtue of their moral nature, and indeed can know him in no other way: 'There is no screen or ceiling between our heads and the infinite heaven, so is there no bar or wall in the soul, where man, the effect ceases, and God, the cause begins. The walls are taken away. We lie open on one side to the deeps of spiritual nature, to the attributes of God.'



He was master of the thought-provoking aphorism. Oracular, arresting aphorisms rolled off his tongue as easily as do epithets from the tongues of many. They twinkle out of his essays like stars on a midsummer night :

A friend is a person with whom I may be sincere.

An institution is the length and shadow of one man.

Life wastes itself whilst we are preparing to live.

The religions of the world are the ejaculations of a few imaginative men

Men of character are the conscience of the society to which they belong.

The reward of a thing well done is to have done it.

Every man takes care that his neighbour does not cheat him. But a day comes when he begins to care that he does not cheat his neighbour. Then he has changed his market cart into a chariot of the sun.

That is always best which gives me to myself.

With each new mind, a new secret of nature transpires, nor can the Bible be closed until the last great man is born

Great men exist that there may be greater men

No questions are unanswerable. Whatever curiosity the order of things has awakened in our minds, the order of things can satisfy

The truth takes flesh in forms that can express it.

By the permanence of Nature, minds are trained alike, and made intelligible to each other.

The end pre-exists in the means.

In sayings such as these, Emerson taught the great principles of the unitary character

of life and the universality of truth, and thus laid the foundation for the Unitarian Universalist movement of our own day.

At the end of his Divinity School address, Emerson counselled the young theologs as to what they should do.

Now let us do what we can to rekindle the smouldering, nigh-quenched fire on the altar. The evils of the church that now is are manifest. The question returns, what shall we do? I confess, all attempts to project and establish a Cultus with new rites and forms, seems to me vain. Faith makes us and not we it, and faith makes its own forms. Rather let the breath of new life be breathed by you through the forms already existing. For if once you are alive, you shall find that they shall become plastic and new. The remedy to their deformity is first, soul, and evermore, soul. What hinders that now, everywhere, in pulpits, in lecture rooms, in houses, in fields, wherever the invitation of men or your own occasions lead you, you speak the very truth, as your life and conscience teach it, and cheer the waiting, fainting hearts of men with new hope and new revelation?

I look for the hour when that supreme Beauty which ravished the soul of those Eastern men, shall speak in the West also. I look for the new Teacher that shall follow so far those shining laws that he shall see them come full circle; shall see their rounding complete grace, shall see the identity of the law of gravitation with purity of heart; and shall show that the Ought, that Duty, is one thing with Science, with Beauty, and with Joy.

His advice and hope are equally sound for us, and all of us, and set a mark for us to aim for.

# KANYAKUMARI: VIVEKANANDA AT LAND'S END

JOHN SCHLENCK

[ Background: After travelling the length and breadth of India for three years as a mendicant friar, Swami Vivekananda arrived at Kanyakumari, the southernmost tip, of the country, in late December, 1892. This place of pilgrimage contains a temple to Goddess Kanyākumārī, an aspect of the Universal Mother. About 1/4 mile from the shore, twin rocks jut out from the sea. After worshipping at Mother's temple, Vivekananda swam through the turbulent, shark-infested waters to the further of the two rocks. This rock is now known as Vivekananda Rock and is capped by a beautiful memorial temple to the great Swami. He remained for three days and nights on the solitary rock, meditating intensely on the condition of India—her present degradation and the misery of the people, her past glory and future potentialities. In this meditation his ideas for the regeneration of the nation took shape, ideas which eventually found concrete expression in the Ramakrishna Mission. At the same time, he decided to accept the advice of several of his followers to go to America the following year to attend the World Parliament of Religions in Chicago. He would seek material aid for his country while sharing India's spiritual wealth with the Western world.

The text is given on the following pages. The composer feels strong parallels between Vivekananda and some of the Hebrew prophets, and so has drawn from Biblical as well as Indian sources ]

## 1 THE CRY OF THE PEOPLE ; THE DIVINE RESPONSE

### *Full chorus*

Tamaso mā jyotirgamaya. (From darkness lead me to light.)  
Out of the depths we cry to Thee.  
Out of the darkness lead us to light.<sup>1</sup>  
Kyrie eleison. (Lord have mercy.)<sup>2</sup>  
Lead us from darkness to light.  
Lord have mercy on us.  
Lead us from bondage to freedom.  
Out of darkness lead us forward into Thy light ;  
Out of bondage lead us forward to Thy freedom.  
Lord have mercy on us !  
The world is burning in misery ! Can you sleep ?<sup>3</sup>

### *Men's chorus*

I have seen the affliction of my people and have heard their cry.  
I know their suffering, and have come down to deliver them.<sup>4</sup>

1. *Bṛhadāraṇyaka-Upaniṣad* 1.3.28 ; *Psalm* 130:1

2. *Psalm* 51:1 (in Greek—used in traditional Christian services).

3. Swami Vivekananda's letter to Sister Nivedita, 7.6.1896.

4. *Exodus* 3:7-8.

## 2. PRAYER AT MOTHER'S TEMPLE

*Women's chorus*

(First alone, then in counterpoint with first two lines of next solo section)  
Devī Kanyākumārī Nārāyaṇī namostute. (Salutation to Thee, O virgin Mother Kanyā.)

Śaraṇāgata dīnārta paritrāṇa parāyaṇe, sarvasyārtihare devī nārāyaṇī namostute.  
(Thou art full of eagerness to save the poor and the afflicted who take refuge in Thee. Salutation to Thee, O Divine Mother who removest the misery of all.)<sup>5</sup>

*Solo*

O Divine Mother, who art ever eager to save the poor and the afflicted who take refuge in Thee, I bow to Thee, O power of mercy.

Who else but Thou, dispeller of poverty, pain and fear, hast an ever sympathetic heart to help all beings?<sup>6</sup>

O Eternal Mother, who takest away the misery of all Thy children, I bow to Thee, I give my life.

*Men's chorus, then full chorus*

Yā devī sarvabhūteṣu śaktirūpena samsthitā, namastasyai, namastasyai, namastasyai, namo namah (Salutations again and again to the Divine Mother who abides in all beings in the form of power.)<sup>7</sup>

*Solo*

(In counterpoint with previous choral section.)

O embodiment of energy, fill me with energy

O embodiment of strength, bestow strength upon me.

O embodiment of power, grant power unto me.

O embodiment of courage, inspire me with courage.

O embodiment of fortitude, steel me with fortitude.<sup>8</sup>

## 3 SWIM TO THE ROCK

*Full chorus*

Plunge into the dark waters, noble hero!

Into the tumult and danger, go alone,

Without fear, to seek your destiny.

Swim out to the far rock, great soul,

To look back at the scarred and sacred land

See it whole and know its destiny.

5. *Caṇḍī* 11.12.

6. *ibid.*, 4.17.

7. *ibid.*, 5.32-34

8. *Śukla Yajur-Veda Samhitā*, 19.9

Plunge into the great waters of your heart,  
 Into the turmoil of pity and despair ;  
 Find there the key to unlock man's destiny.  
 Plung deep into the fathomless Alone ;  
 Touching the core of infinite mercy,  
 Come forth transfigured, to fulfill your destiny.

#### 4 MEDITATION

##### *Solo*

Why has the sacred land become as a burning ground ?  
 Why have strength and wisdom yielded to desolation ?  
 Why do ignorance, hunger and weakness reign everywhere ?  
 . . . . Yet, beneath the dust and ashes, living treasures endure.  
 Why do the descendants of saints and sages starve and cower in wretchedness ?  
 Why do the guardians of religion oppress the people and atrophy in their own narrowness ?  
 Why do separation, jealousy and hardheartedness reign everywhere ?  
 . . . . Yet devotion and kindness dwell even now among the poor.  
 Where have gone the fearlessness of the Vedas, the heroism of the Epics, the liberality of Kṛṣṇa, the compassion of Buddha and Caitanya ?  
 Where are manliness, sympathy for the poor, sacrifice for the common good ?  
 Where are they gone, where are they gone in this living death ?  
 . . . . Yet these very qualities I have seen fully manifest in this age, in my master, Sri Ramakrishna.  
 Because the nation closed in on itself, smug in its own conceit, not caring to give or learn ;  
 Because its great treasure of divine knowledge was locked up in books and monasteries ;  
 Because the people have lost confidence in themselves and in their heritage, and blindly imitate foreign ways ;  
 Stagnation, decay and hopelessness reign everywhere.  
 . . . . Yet in my master I have seen the living glory of the nation ; in him flow living waters of truth for all mankind.  
 Can the holy land once more open its doors,  
 To give generously of its own treasure,  
 To receive with wisdom treasure from abroad ?  
 Can the divine heritage be released from its prison  
 And spread broadcast to every town and village,  
 Even to the humblest cottage ?  
 Can the lost confidence of the people, in themselves  
 And in their heritage, be restored, so that once again  
 They walk erect in strength and pride ?  
 O God, my master, my Divine Mother,  
 Hear my prayer, show me my path.  
 I do not want my own bliss or freedom ;

I do not care for a religion  
 That cannot put bread into the mouth of the hungry  
 Or wipe away the widow's tears.<sup>9</sup>  
 I only crave for guidance and strength  
 To serve your living images,  
 To right the wrongs inflicted on your people for ages.  
 How long, O Lord ?<sup>10</sup>

## 5. REVELATION

### *Men's chorus*

Before I formed you in the womb I knew you,  
 And before you were born I consecrated you :  
 I appointed you a prophet to the nations.<sup>11</sup>

### *Full chorus*

Arise, shine, for your light is come :<sup>12</sup>  
 Preach good tidings to the meek, bind up the broken-hearted,  
 Open the prison of them that are bound, comfort all that mourn,  
 Give unto them beauty in place of ashes,  
 The oil of joy in place of mourning,  
 The mantle of praise for the spirit of heaviness :  
 And they shall build up the old wastes,  
 They shall raise up the former desolations.<sup>13</sup>

### *Men's chorus*

Prophesy unto them,  
 'O ye dry bones, hear the word of the Lord :  
 "Behold, I will lay sinews upon you, and will bring up flesh upon you, and put  
 breath into you, and ye shall live." "<sup>14</sup>

### *Full chorus*

' "O my people, I will open your graves, and cause you to come up out of your  
 graves, and shall put my spirit into you, and ye shall live." "<sup>15</sup>  
 He who burns with the bliss and suffers the sorrow  
 Of every creature within his own heart,

9. *Letters of Swami Vivekananda.*

10. *Psalm* 13:1.

11. *Jeremiah* 1:5.

12. *Isaiah* 60:1.

13. *ibid*, 61:1-4.

14. *Ezekiel* 37:4-6.

15. *ibid*, 37:12,14.

Making his own each bliss and each sorrow—  
I hold him highest of all the Yogis.<sup>18</sup>

*Solo*

(Mostly paraphrased from letters and poems of Swami Vivekananda, and from 'The Voice of the Mother' by Nivedita, a compilation of Swami Vivekananda's utterances.)

Sacrifice...

Out of the bedrock of sacrifice  
Rise the twin pillars of renunciation and service.  
These must be the ideals of the nation—  
Renunciation of self and service of man,  
Of man as God's living image—  
For the deliverance of the nation,  
For the liberation of all humanity.  
Let the flame of self-sacrifice  
Consume our youth with a passion beyond control of thought.  
Let them thirst for renunciation as others for enjoyment.  
Forgetting their own bliss and freedom,  
Let them count labour and suffering and service  
As sweet instead of bitter.  
Seeking no mercy for themselves,  
They shall bear great vessels of mercy to others.  
They shall form a living bridge  
For the multitude to cross over into joy and freedom.  
They shall go from village to village,  
Worshipping God in his living images—  
Serving God the ignorant, God the hungry, God the poor and the sick,  
God's living presence in every human form.  
When these living images of God  
Are again made strong in body and mind,  
Tell them of their divine heritage,  
Of the freedom and fearlessness of the soul,  
Of the Oneness of all existence.  
Teach them how to manifest their divinity  
In every movement of life.  
Here before us is God's living presence,  
Visible, real, omnipresent.  
Rejecting these living Gods, where shall we worship?

*Full chorus*

Before I formed you in the womb I knew you  
And before you were born I consecrated you ;

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<sup>18</sup>. *Bhagavad-Gītā* 6.32.

I appointed you a prophet to the nations.<sup>17</sup>  
 Go forth from your country and your kindred  
 Unto the land that I will show you.<sup>18</sup>  
 Go forth across the sea and over the mountains  
 Unto the new land that I will show you.  
 I will bless you and make your name great ;  
 Through you may all the families of earth find blessing.

17. *Jeremiah* 1.5.

18. *Genesis* 12.1-3, slightly revised.

## HOLY PLACES IN KASHMIR

PROF. CHAMAN LAL SAPRU

The scenic beauty of Kashmir is famous all over the world, and attracts every year thousands of tourists who seek relaxation, enjoyment and the charms of nature. Few people outside the State, however, know that it also abounds in a number of pilgrimage centres. Indeed, a popular Sanskrit verse says, 'All the holy places of the world are found in the region of Kashmir.'<sup>1</sup> Living as they do in geographical isolation from the rest of India, Kashmiris have learnt to keep the roots of their culture alive by identifying their rivers, lakes and places with the holy *tirthas* of the mainland. Thus they see the Ganga in their own Gangabal, and Prayaga in the *sahgam* (confluence) of their own rivers the Vitastā (more commonly as the Jhelum) and the Sindhu at Shadipur.

From Vedic times to the twelfth century of the present era, Kashmir was one of the important centres of Hindu culture, religion and philosophy. The vitality of the past still survives in the faith, traditions and ways of life of Kashmiri Hindus. Every

Hindu who believes in the Sanātana traditions worships God in the form of *Pañcāyatan*, the Five Deities (literally, the 'five abodes') namely, Gaṇeśa, Śiva, Visnu, Devī and Sūrya. We have in Kashmir temples and *tirthas* (holy places) dedicated to all these deities and also to Avatārs like Śrī Rāma. Let us first note some of the important places of pilgrimage associated with these deities before taking up a general survey of the holy places in Kashmir.

### Gaṇeśa

Gaṇeśa is worshipped as the *ādi deva* (First Deity) in all Hindu rites. He is the son of Śiva, and is considered to be *siddhidātā* (the boon-giver) and *vighnahartā* (destroyer of obstacles). In Srinagar we have a prominent temple of Gaṇeśa in the heart of the city. It was formerly under the management of the Dharmarth Trust, but is now managed by a local managing committee. An annual festival on Vaiśākha Śuklā Caturdaśī is held in the premises of the temple, and a *mahāyajña* by the Brahman Maha Mandal is performed on the Prahma Jayanti day. There is a legend that during the period of the Pathan rulers,

1. पृथिव्यां यानि तीर्थाणि तानि कश्मीरमण्डले ;

*Nilamata Purāna* (An ancient work popular in Kashmir)

several hundred years back, the original idol of Lord Gaṇeśa had been submerged in the Vitastā by the Pandits to save it from desecration. During the Dogra rule the idol was reclaimed by the devotees and installed on the Vaiśākha Śuklā Caturdaśi in the temple. This ancient idol is placed in the outer temple by the side of the Śiva *lingam*, and two bigger and more attractive idols, most probably donated by Dogra rulers, are in the main temple.

There is another important temple of Lord Gaṇeśa at the foot of the hillock of Harī Parbat which every Hindu considers it his sacred duty to go round everyday. Lord Gaṇeśa's temple is the first amongst the shrines strewn on this hillock.

Even the holy pilgrimage to Sri Amarnathji starts with the worship of Śrī Gaṇeśa at Ganeshabal near Pahalgam.

#### *Śankara or Śiva*

There is hardly any place of worship in Kashmir where you will not find a *Śiva lingam*. In the world-famous cave of Amarnath an ice *lingam* is formed to full size on the fifteenth of the bright half of every month, (Pūrṇimā), and is an object of reverential attraction to the devotees of all faiths. This holy place is visited on the Śrāvaṇa Pūrṇimā every year by thousands of pilgrims from far-off places. The pilgrimage starts from the Dashnami Akhādā of Srinagar in the form of a procession. The Mahant (abbot) of the Akhādā carries the holy silver mace of Lord Śiva and is followed by hundreds of Sādhus. They reach the cave on the fullmoon day of Śrāvaṇa, which coincides with the popular Rakṣā-Bandhan festival of North India. Among the great men who have visited this holy cave, the names of Swami Vivekananda and Swami Ramtirtha are worth mentioning. Swami Ramtirtha composed beautiful verses in praise of the Lord. Swami Vivekananda had a profound mystical ex-

perience in the cave. Afterwards he said to his European disciples, 'The image was the Lord Himself. It was all worship there. I never have been to anything so beautiful, so inspiring.'<sup>2</sup>

Another beautiful stone-temple of Lord Śiva is situated on a hill in the Srinagar city commanding a magnificent view. The temple is managed by the Dharmarth Trust. The hill, known as Gopātri in ancient Sanskrit texts, had the shrine of Jyeṣṭha Rudra on it. It is believed that the great Ācārya Śrī Śamkara on his visit to Srinagar, meditated on this hill which now bears his name. Swami Vivekananda has given the following description of the temple: 'Look! what genius the Hindu shows in placing his temples! He always chooses a grand scenic effect! See, the hill commands the whole of Kashmir.'<sup>3</sup>

The snow-clad peaks around the valley bear one or the other name of Lord Śiva, like 'Mahādeva', 'Harmukha', etc. It was under the Mahadeva peak in the picturesque range of Harwan that the famous Śiva-Sūtras (the basis of Śaiva philosophy) were composed. Devotees visit this place particularly on the same day on which the pilgrimage to Amarnathji is undertaken. They also visit the following places of worship connected with Śiva on the same day: Dhyaneswar in Bandipur, Thajwor in Bijbehara and Harishwar in Khonmoh.

There are numerous temples of Śiva in the whole valley. Among them Sadashiva temple in Purushyar and Someshwar temple in Habbakadal find mention in the famous histories and Purāṇas of Kashmir.

#### *Viṣṇu*

The only holy place connected with Lord Viṣṇu in Kashmir is Viṣṇu-Pāda or

2. His Eastern and Western Disciples, *The Life of Swami Vivekananda* (Calcutta: Advaita Ashrama, 1974) p. 592.

3. *ibid*, p. 583.



**Kaunsar Naga.** This is a big lake situated at a height of more than 14,000 feet in Anantnag district. The lake is shaped like a foot and it is believed that Lord Viṣṇu had placed his holy foot in the place where the present big lake is found.

### *Devī or Divine Mother*

We have numerous places of pilgrimage dedicated to the Divine Mother in Kashmir of which Ksheer Bhawani, Sri Sharika Mandir, Mahakali Mandir (in Srinagar and Vadora), Jwala Mukhi (in Khrew), Shailapuri (in Nagabal, Baramulla), Baladevi, Sri Vaishnodevi and Sarthal Devi (in Jammu region) are well known. The most important among them all is of course Ksheer Bhawani.

The temple of Goddess Mahārajanī, known as Ksheer Bhawani, is situated about 14 miles away from Srinagar at the village Tulamula in the famous Sindh valley. The road leading to Ksheer Bhawani has also a spiritual significance. While going to Ksheer Bhawani first we reach 'Vicharnag' (the lake of discrimination). Then we reach 'Tyangal-bal' (the hill of burning charcoals) and Kavaj-var (the fire of cremation ground) and Amar-her (the immortal staircase). These two names denote renunciation. The third place is Aanchar Lake, which derives its origin from Aachar (righteousness). After going through these places we reach the cherished destination, the holy place of the Divine Mother, the abode of love, pure and divine, and be with the Divine Mother.

An old Sanskrit text called the *Bhṛngeśa Samhitā*<sup>4</sup> carries a chapter known as 'Rajanī-Prādurbhava' which gives a description of the origin of this temple. Rāvaṇa, the demon-king of Lanka, in order to attain unlimited power worshipped Mother

Mahā-rajani. The Divine Mother after being moved by the immense *tapas* (penance) performed by Rāvaṇa, bestowed upon him many boons. Soon after, Rāvaṇa began to lead a life of luxury, and after forcibly taking away Sītā, prepared himself for a battle with Lord Rāma. After watching the misbehaviour of Rāvaṇa, the Devī asked Hanumān to take Her to Satisar (Kashmir) along with 360 Nagas. Hanumānji installed the Devī at the Tulamula village in Kashmir Valley. Here the Devī is being worshipped as 'Ksheer Bhawani' or Goddess Rajanī. Only flowers, milk and sweets are offered to Her.

The Brahmins of Tulamula have been described in *Rājatarangini* as full with spiritual powers. For quite sometime in the past this important *tīrtha* remained under flood waters, and it was only after a pious Brahmin Sri Kṛishna Pandit had a vision of it that the place was rediscovered. He was a great devotee of the Devī and composed the famous hymn the *Rajanī Stotra*. Later on a beautiful marble temple was erected in the centre of the 'Kunda' (spring) by the Dogra rulers. This spring changes colours and is shaped like 'OM' in the Sharada script. Every year an annual festival is held on Jyēṣṭha Śuklā Aṣṭami at this holy place.

During his stay in Kashmir Swami Vivekananda visited this holy place twice or thrice. Soon after he had had the stupendous vision of Mother Kālī at a solitary place near Srinagar, Swamiji went to Ksheer Bhawani on September 30, 1898. There he lived a life of intense *tapas* and devotion to the Mother for a week. His biography gives the following details of his stay.

Before this famous shrine of the Mother he daily performed Homa, and worshipped Her with offering of Kheer (thickened milk) made from one maund of milk, rice and almonds. He told his beads like any humble pilgrim; and as a special Sadhana, every morning he worshipped

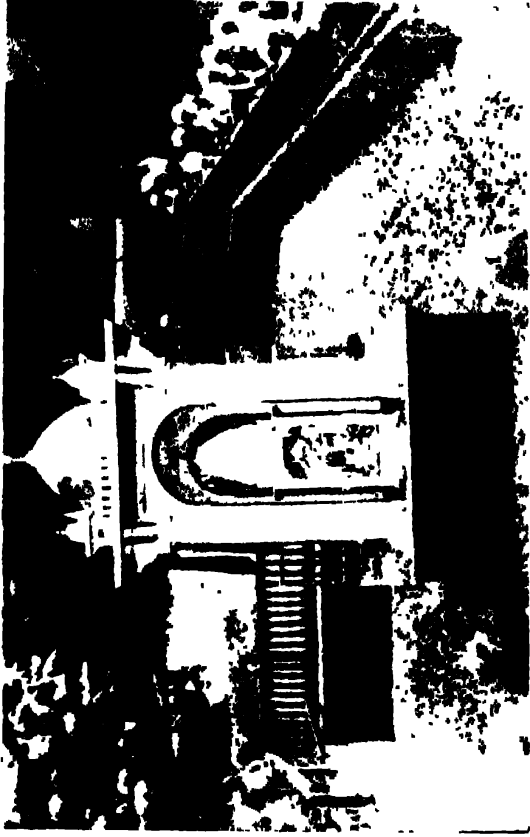
4. This text, source of many other 'Māhātmyas', is not extant now.



The cave of Amarnath with the ice lingam in the centre



Siva temple on Shankaracharya Hill



Ksheer-Bhawani: shrine and *kund*



Ksheer-Bhawani  
images of Mother  
Rajani and  
Bhūteswar Śiva in  
the shrine



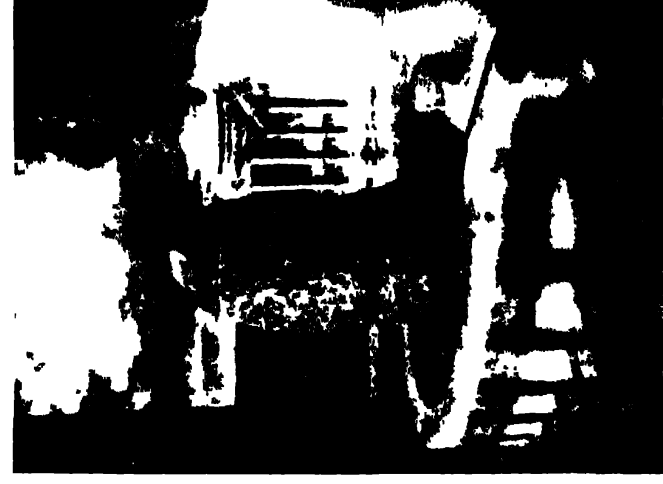
Martand ruins of Natmandir



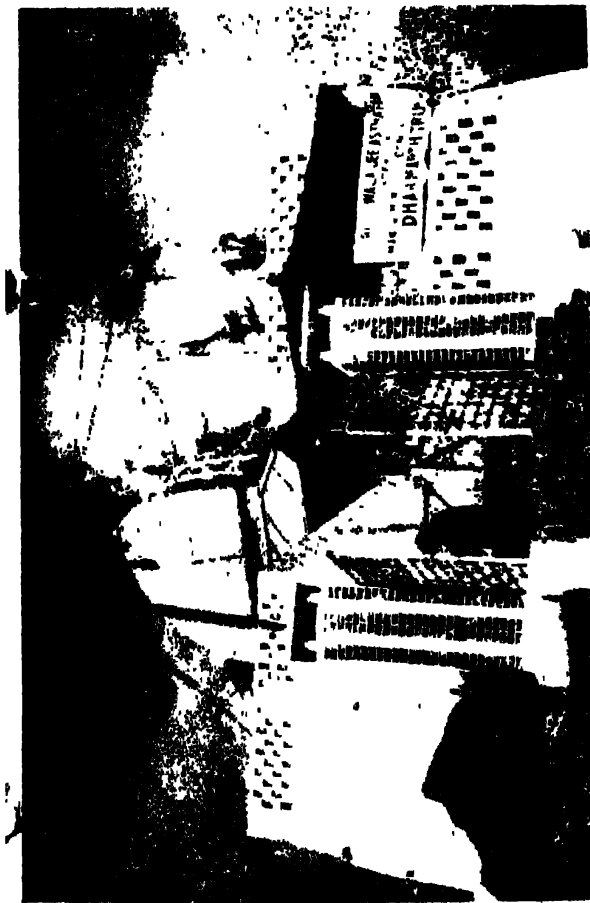
Vetha-Vatur source of the river Vitasta (Jhelum)



Martand front view of the main temple dedicated to the Sun



Kapal Mochan 'open air' Shivalinga at Shopian



Jwala Mukhi temple at Khrew



Sharika Chakre-  
swari temple on  
Hari Parbat



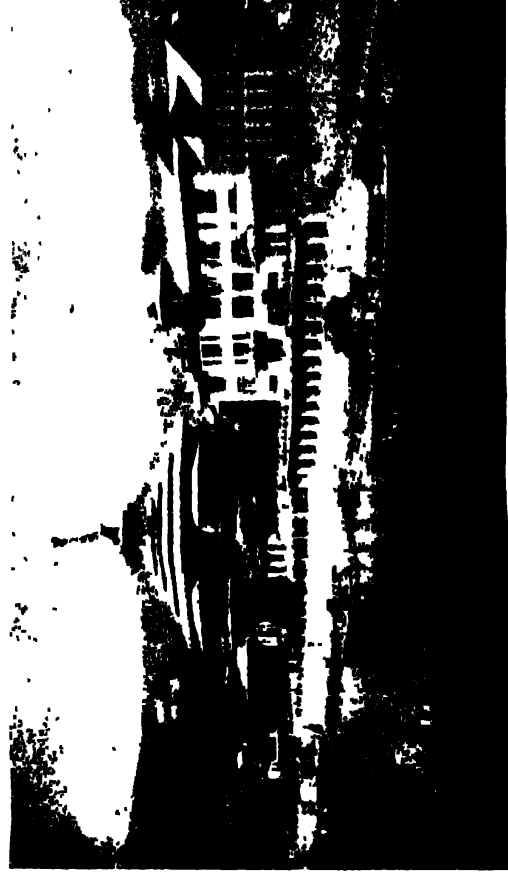
Hari parbat seen from Dal Lake



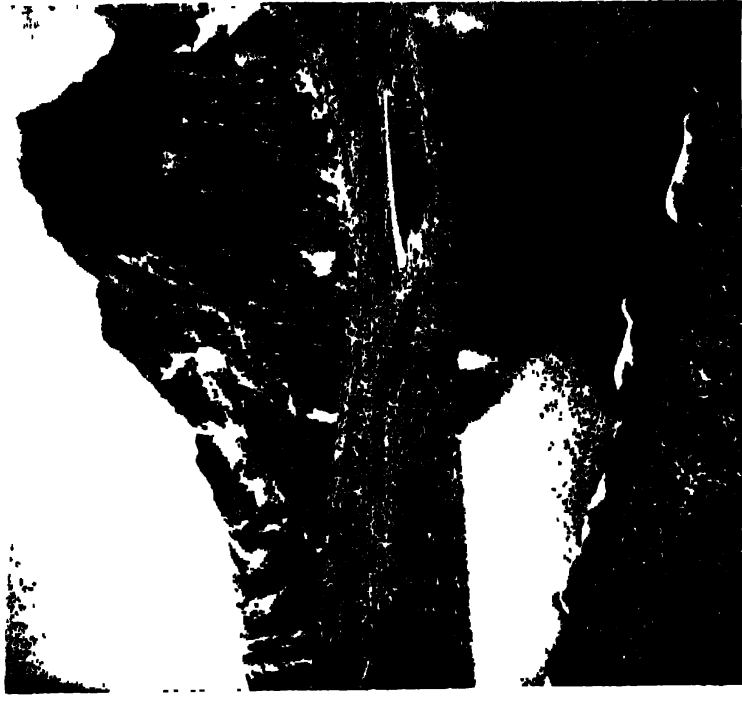
Mother Sarada of  
the famous Saradā  
Pīthā of Pakistan-  
occupied Kashmir  
now invoked and  
worshipped at  
Lakar in Kupvara  
near the border



Gangabal lake



Mahakali Asthapan (right) with the mosque of Shah Hamdan and Hari Parbat to the left



Krishen Sar lake



Hazratbal mosque where a holy relic of Prophet Mohamed is preserved

a Brahmin pandit's little daughter as Uma Kumari, the Divine Virgin. He began to practise the sternest austerities.

When he returned to Srinagar, he appeared before his disciples a transfigured presence, writes Nivedita. 'No more "Hari Om!" It is all "Mother" now' he said, sitting down. 'All my patriotism is gone. Everything is gone. Now it is only "Mother! Mother!"... Mother said to me: "What, even if unbelievers should enter my temples, and defile my images! What is that to you? Do you protect Me? Or do I protect you?" So there is no more patriotism. I am only a little child.'

One day at Kshir-Bhawani he had been pondering over the ruination and desecration of the temple wrought by the Muslim invaders. It was then that he had heard the Mother speaking as above. In his meditation on the Terrible, in the dark hours of the nights at Kshir-Bhawani, there were other visions that he confided only to one or two of his brother-disciples.

At the same shrine, in the course of worship one day, the Swami was brooding with pain on the dilapidated condition of the temple. He wished in his heart that he were able to build a new one there in its place. He was startled in his ruminations by the voice of the Mother Herself, saying to him, 'My child! if I so wish I can have innumerable temples and magnificent monastic centres. I can even this moment raise a seven-storeyed golden temple on this very spot.'<sup>5</sup>

### *Sun temple at Martand*

Only five miles away from the town of Anantnag on the way to Amarnath, is a village known as Mattan or Bhawan. In ancient scriptures the name of this place is given as Martand (the sun). Here is a beautiful spring and a small rivulet flowing nearby known as the Chaka. On the banks of the Chaka thousands of devotees from northern India perform *śrāddha* to their deceased ancestors in *adhikamāsa* months on Vijaya Saptami. About 2½ km. from the spring are the ruins of a magnificent

temple dedicated to the Sun known as Martand. The temple in Indo-Greek architectural style was built by Lalitāditya, a great king of Kashmir. Swami Vivekananda visited this place at least three times.

### *Other shrines*

The two prominent places of pilgrimage of Muslims and Sikhs are Hazratbal and Chhatipadshahi. The Hazratbal shrine on the Dal lake facing east is known as the Second Mecca. The holy relic of Prophet Muhammad is preserved here. The Chhatipadshahi is a Gurdwara near Hari Parbat which had been visited by the sixth Guru of the Sikhs. Once upon a time the region of Kashmir was an important centre of Buddhism, the influence of which is seen in some temple sculpture. At present Buddhism is the dominant religion of Ladak which is now a part of the state of Jammu and Kashmir.

It shall be noted that in this article we are dealing with only the holy places in Kashmir proper. Those in Jammu and Ladak have their own distinctive features and have not been included here. Let us now have a bird's-eye view of the innumerable holy places found all over the valley of Kashmir.

## SOUTHERN KASHMIR

### *Amarnath*

The natural cave with its huge ice Śiva Lingam is the most famous centre of pilgrimage in Kashmir.

### *Vetha-Vatur*

Here is the source of river Vitasta. Annual pilgrimage to this place is performed on the thirteenth day of the dark half of the Bhādra month.

5. *The Life of Swami Vivekananda*, p. 598, 599-600

*Khana Barni*

Dedicated to Divine Mother, it is near Qazigund.

*Kapal Mochan*

Annual festival on Śrāvaṇa Śuklā Dvādaśī is held here and devotees perform *śrāddha*. It is situated near Shopian.

*Manzgam*

A temple in the forest, dedicated to Mother Rajna. Annual festival is held on Jyēṣṭha Aṣṭamī.

*Anantnag*

This holy spring after which the town as well as the district is named, is famous for its crystal-clear water. Annual festival of Ananta Devata is held on the fourteenth day of the dark half of Bhādra month.

*Thajiwore*

It is situated near Bijbihara. An old Śiva temple is found here and the annual festival is held in Śrāvaṇa Pūrṇimā.

*Gautama Nag*

It is situated at about 4½ km away from Anantnag.

*Lokabhawan*

Annual festival is held here and a *mahāyajña* performed. It is 11 miles from Anantnag.

*Uma Nagari*

A temple and a spring of Goddess Umā is found here. Annual *mahāyajña* is performed here.

*Nagadandi*

Sri Ramakrishna Maha Sammelan, managed by the Vivekananda Rock Memorial Committee of Kanyakumari, is situated here. An ancient spring and a few idols of some ancient temple are found here. An annual festival is held on the day Chhari (Amarnath pilgrimage) starts. It is 3 km. away from Achhabal.

*Gosayen Gond*

An attractive neat and clean Ashram is found here. During Amarnath Yatra a number of devotees visit this Ashram and stay and meditate for a few days.

*Viṣṇu Pad*

Known also as Kaunsarnaga, it is about 14 miles away from Aharbal tal., the journey to it is hazardous.

*Jwala Mukhi*

This *tīrtha* dedicated to Goddess Jvālā (Flame) is situated about 20 km from Srinagar in Anantnag district. A temple of Jvalaji is situated on a hillock there. Annual festival is held in Jvālā-Caturdaśī (fourteenth day of the dark second half of Āsād).

*Kurukshetra*

It is near Pampore (famous for saffron, where the great mystic poetess of Kashmir, Lalleshwari of Lalded, lived). Festivals are held here on the occasions of solar and lunar eclipses.

*Baladevi*

This famous *tīrtha* is dedicated to Bala Bhagavati (Tripurasundarī). She is the family deity of the Dogra rulers, and the temple is managed by the Dharmarth Trust. This place of pilgrimage is situated in Balahama near Pampur.

## NORTHERN KASHMIR

*Koti Tirtha*

It is situated on the right bank of the Vitasta (Jhelum) at Baramulla. It is believed that the holy waters of one crore *tirthas* reach here through the Vitasta and is therefore considered very sacred.

*Shailputri (Devibal)*

This *tirtha* is situated on the left bank of the Vitasta at Baramulla. This is a miniature Ksheer-Bhawani.

*Nandkeshwar (Seer-Jugir)*

A famous temple of Śiva known as Nandakeśvar Bhairava, situated on the left bank of the Vitasta at Sopore. The annual festival is held on Jyestha Amāvasyā here.

*Nandkesawar (Sumbal)*

An ancient place for worship of Nandakeśvar Bhairava situated in Sumbal village.

*Gophabal*

Situated near Langet, Handwara

*Bhadrakali*

This *Tirtha* dedicated to Goddess Kālī is situated in a thick pine forest near Vadipora (Handwara).

*Takar (Gushi)*

Situated near Kupvara, this *tirtha* is dedicated to the Divine Mother (Māhārajānī).

*Chandigam*

Situated in the picturesque valley of Lolab in Sogam. A monastery of Sannyasins belonging to the Niranjani Akhada has been established here.

*Gosayeen Teng*

Situated on a hillock at Baramulla. Some springs dedicated to Bhagavān Śrī Rāmacandra are found here.

*Sharadaji*

Now in Pakistan-occupied Kashmir, and situated on the bank of Kishanganga, it was a famous centre of pilgrimage throughout the country before partition. It is considered to be a *siddha pītha*, like the Sharika Chakreshwar temple on Hari Parbat. It was once upon a time a great centre of learning, and students as well as scholars from far off places used to come here. Some monuments still exist there. The place was for centuries associated with the culmination of Hindu religious scholarship and authority which even the great teacher Śrī Śamkara had to acknowledge.

## DISTRICT SRINAGAR

*Shankaracharya Hill*

A beautiful Śiva temple exists on the hillock called Shankaracharya Hill. Annual festival on the day of Amarnath Darśan is held here

*Hari Parbat*

A hillock in Srinagar city, it has many temples around it. The main temple is of Goddess Śārikā, the presiding Deity of Kashmir. Annual festivals on the first Navarātrī and Āṣāḍha Navami are held here. This is considered a *siddha pītha*, a place of awakened Divine Presence.

*Ksheer Bhawani*

Twenty kilometres away from Srinagar, it is a spring in which a temple has been constructed dedicated to Mother Rajānī. Annual festival is held on Jyestha Āṣṭami.



**Gangabal**

A lake situated near Harmukh peak ; it is the most beautiful lake in Kashmir. Annual festival is held on the Ganga Aṣṭami in Bhādra month. People immerse the ashes of their dead relatives here and also perform Śrāddha. The journey to this place is most hazardous but is much rewarding.

**Guptaganga (Nishat)**

Just adjacent to the Nishat garden On the Vaiśākhi festival devotees come from all over Kashmir to have a dip in the spring here. A Śaiva Math is also attached to it where Sunday classes on Śaivism are conducted by the well-known teacher Swami Lakshman Joo.

**Jyeshtheshwara**

A temple of Jyēsthā Devī is located in between Shankaracharya Hill and Chasma Shahi. A pilgrimage to this place on Thursdays in the month Jyēstha is considered auspicious.

**Gangajatan**

Situated in the tehsil of Badgam. On Ganga Aṣṭami day people come here to have a dip. It is almost a dry spring but on this particular day, at a particular hour, water gushes out and devotees have their holy bath.

**Badipur**

Situated in the tehsil Chadura near Nagam, it is a miniature Ksheer Bhawani. Annual *mahāyajña* on Vaiśākha Śuklā Aṣṭami is held here.

**Mahakali Asthapan**

Situated by the side of the famous

Khanaqah of Shah Hamdan ; it is believed that a magnificent temple of Mahā Kālī once existed here. The annual festival is held here on Pauṣa Kṛṣṇa Pakṣa Aṣṭami.

**Vaskur**

Dedicated to the mystic poetess Rūpa Bhavānī, considered to be an incarnation of Goddess Śārikā. Annual festival is held here on Sahib-Saptami, the seventh day of the dark fortnight of Māgha.

**Vichar Nag**

Situated on Srinagar-Leh Highway at a distance of about 10 km. from Srinagar. The annual festival is held on Caitra Amāvasyā the last day of the Kashmiri calendar.

The famous Kashmiri Pandit, Shirya Bhat, responsible for the change of heart of Sultan Zainulabidin, later known as Budshah (the Great Monarch), lived here.

**JAMMU****Vaishno Devi**

This is as famous as Amarnathji and Ksheer-Bhawani of Kashmir. Thousands of pilgrims, mostly from northern India, visit this place. The Divine Mother in her Vaiṣṇavī form is being worshipped here. The main temple is 11 km. above Katra, a town on Jammu-Srinagar National Highway. Devotees prefer to visit the shrine on Nava-Rātra days.

**Sarthal Devi**

It is situated in Doda district of Kishtwar. There is a popular belief that Mother Śārikā (Hari Parbat) shifts during winter to this place.

There are many other places of pilgrimage in Jammu region such as Burha Amarnath, Sudh Mahdev, etc.



# HUMAN TRENDS

## VINOBA'S PATH OF PEACEFUL REVOLUTION

DR ANIL BARAN RAY

In the wake of posthumous award of 'Bharat Ratna' to Acharya Vinoba Bhave, it will be worth while to take note of his contributions towards the betterment of our life and culture. This article makes the point that Acharya Bhave, as the prefix to his name so rightfully depicted, was, above all, a teacher who taught his countrymen, indeed, the whole world about the ways of achieving a new social order.

### *Training in non-violence*

Before he became a teacher himself, he did his homework with no less a teacher than Mahatma Gandhi. Having trained him in Satyagraha and Non-violence, the master was full of admiration for his pupil: 'He is, next to me, the best exponent and embodiment of non-violence. I use the words "next to me" because he has taken the cult of non-violence from me... he has greater power of concentration than myself. His antipathy of war is born of pure non-violence.' Bhave's first-ever chance to apply his master's principle into practice came when he was sponsored by the master as the 'first Satyagrahi' to offer non-violent resistance to the British in the campaign of October, 1940.

### *Perception of the problem*

The experience thus gained must have instilled the necessary confidence in him to carry on the non-violent struggle absolutely on his own during the communist-led peasant uprising of 1949 in Telengana in Andhra Pradesh. Gandhiji was no longer there to physically guide him, but then the disciple made Gandhiji's principle his own and as such felt the constant 'presence of Bapu' in the mission that he undertook in Telengana. Though the Telengana uprising was quickly suppressed by the government, Bhave realized that physical suppression could not extinguish the spirit of unrest. The roots of the problem lay in the inequality of land distribution. While a few had too much of land in their possession, the rest had too little. Inequality bred discontent, and the discontent uprising. The solution lay in the equitable redistribution of land in such a way that the common good—the welfare of all—was served thereby.

### *Solution*

How would he accomplish such a mission? He would undertake a walking

campaign and persuade the rich people who had land in excess of their requirements to make a sacrificial gift of their excess land to the landless. What does the possessor of property get in return? He gets the love, affection, feelings of brotherhood and friendliness and, above all, that sense of satisfaction, that *ānanda*, which comes out of a gift lovingly made. Let those who *have* look upon those who *have not*, just as a mother looks upon her child. Does not she feed the baby before she feeds herself? Does not she starve before she allows the baby to starve? Or for that matter, what does a father do when another son is born to him? Does not he bequeath to that son the share of the property? Is there any coercion in the sacrifice that a father or a mother makes for the sake of his or her child? None whatsoever. He or she does it for the pleasure of it. Let Bhoodan (landgift) be conceived in that spirit. Let rich people contribute their mite for the worship of Daridranārāyana (God as the poor) just for the joy of it, for the fact that it is a genuine *yajña* (sacrifice) for a worthy cause. Once such spirit of motherly love and fatherly affection seizes the possessors of property, a new society will be born—a society free from exploitation, a society wherein each will contribute to the welfare of all, and in the process will contribute to his own enrichment. Man has got to realize that God pervades this universe. He is integrally related to his fellow human beings. By contributing to others he realizes his own self. Once such sense of *self-realization* dawns upon people, Sarvodaya, the uplift-of-all-by-each becomes a reality. The Sarvodaya of Vinoba's conception is thus nothing but the dedication of one's all for the well-being of all.

### Revolution

What Vinoba Bhave sought to accom-

plish was a revolution in social life through a transformation of individual life. His ideological revolution was not, however, meant only for his fellow countrymen. It had a loftier conception of showing a new way to the whole world. As he says,

'People talk of the Russian revolution. America presents an example of a revolution of another type. But looking at these countries, I find that neither type of revolution is in accordance with the genius of India. They are not in accord with our traditions and culture. I firmly believe that India should be able to evolve, consistent with her ideals, a new type of revolution, based purely on love. If people begin to donate lands of their own free will, readily and generously, the whole atmosphere will undergo a sudden change in the twinkling of an eye, and India might well show the way to a new era of freedom, love and happiness for the whole world.'

Was Vinoba Bhave taking too facile a view of human nature? Did he fail to take account of the lower and baser elements of human nature in his overenthusiasm to emphasize the higher and the better? Critics castigating his philosophy of Sarvodaya as utopian have taken stands like that. But it should be noted that Vinoba Bhave did not regard human being as all 'reason' and 'spirit'. All that he said was that man was not all 'appetite' either. Man could be cured of his hunger for material possessions, he could be taught the lessons of *aparigraha* (non-possession), he could be instructed to enjoy with renunciation. His nature could be *elevated*. That was all Bhave said. To quote him, 'There are good and evil thoughts in the minds of everyone. And when a good thought enters the mind, it starts a struggle with evil thoughts. Ultimately, the good thought wins.'

Of course, the psychological change of the kind conceived by Acharya Bhave cannot be brought about by war and violent revolution. It can be accomplished only by the methods of teachers such as Buddha, Christ

and Gandhi. Acharya Vinoba Bhave was in line with these great teachers.

### Conclusion

He wanted to better the world and men. And if the world is not any better today, if the acquisitive instinct of modern man has overtaken the rational and spiritual elements in him, if he runs madly after that which Maitreyī, the wife of the sage Yājñavalkya

in the *Bṛhadāraṇyaka-Upaniṣad*, despised ('What am I to do with that which would not enable me to realize the Supreme?'), the fault lies not in the teaching of the Acharya but in our inability to follow him properly. Acharya Vinoba Bhave said: 'Where there is an ideological revolution, life marches towards progress.' Viewed in that perspective, we should all ask ourselves: are we really making progress today? Are we marching forward?

## REVIEWS AND NOTICES

POINTERS FROM NISARGADATTA MAHARAJ. BY R. S. BALSEKHAR. Published by Chetana Ltd., 34 Rampart Row, Bombay-400 023. 1982. Pp 223. Rs 70.

Nisargadatta Maharaj (who passed away in September 1981) was a notable figure in the illustrious line of Indian householder saints who never stepped into limelight. Indeed he saw no reason why he should come out of his state of absorption in the Awareness which alone was real to him and dissipate himself in the seeming flow of forms and movements that is this world. His talks to the devotees who gathered in his small room in one of the lanes in Bombay were issued some years ago under the title *I AM THAT* and they attracted considerable attention both in India and abroad. This reviewer was agreeably surprised to find these volumes on a private book-shelf in Amsterdam.

The contents of the present book are of a different nature. They are philosophical expositions, at the level of the intellect, of the fundamental ideas and perceptions of the saint. To the actual events and teachings of the last three years of Maharaj, Sri Balsekhar has added his own reflections and observations.

In this approach, Awareness is the only truth. It is 'that state of absolute perfection when consciousness is at total rest and is not aware of its own beingness... When consciousness, which is impersonal in rest, manifests itself by objectifying itself as phenomena, it identifies itself with each sentient object and thus arises

the concept of a separable personal individual "I" which treats all other phenomena as its objects, and each sentient being becomes the subject vis-a-vis all other sentient objects, although all are really objects appearing in consciousness.' (p. 195)

Consequently, it is argued, there is no rebirth, there being nothing to take birth. There is no soul, what is there is only the ego-formation which stands dissolved by the death of the body. Questions of suffering, progress, ethics lose their relevance in this perspective. All the same there are, in these pages, observations of importance for the spiritual seeker.

'Silence is total absence of word and thought only when thought ceases, and conceptualization and objectivization are also suspended. When conceptualization ceases, identity, which is the basis of conceptualization, cannot remain, and in the absence of identity there is no bondage.'

Maharaj had been struck with a fatal disease in his last days. When devotees were concerned about the course of the illness, he remarked, 'My relative absence will be my absolute presence, and the moment of "death" will be the moment of the highest ecstasy, the last sensorial perception of the psychosomatic apparatus' (p. 151).

SRI M. P. PANDIT  
Sri Aurobindo Ashram  
Pondicherry

LETTERS OF SWAMI RAMDAS VOL. 1. 1982. Pp. 190. Rs. 11.

HINTS TO ASPIRANTS: BY SWAMI RAMDAS. 1981. Pp. 225. Rs. 5. Both published by Anandashram, Kanhangad, Dt. Cannanore (Kerala) 670 531.

It is always a spiritual education to read anything from the pen of Papa Ramdas. His writings are direct and communicate his own indubitable experience. The first book, containing his letters from 1928 to 1931 to various correspondents, from different areas of life, throw interesting light on the vicissitudes that his ministry underwent during those early years. His spiritual composure and trust in the wisdom of God when his Ashram was desecrated by vandals are an example. His counsel to aspirants on how to square the demands of worldly life with the requirements of the spiritual is practical. He identifies himself with each person to whom he writes and his letters reflect a love that is divine.

The other book is a compilation from his letters with a view to helping spiritual aspirants. He speaks of four kinds of sadhana: company of holy men; repetition of the divine Name; study of scriptures; meditation on divine attributes (p. 74). He points out that to remain a bachelor is not enough; one has to practise the discipline of Brahmacharya in thought, feeling and action. Pranayama shall not be overdone. Deep breathing is all right to promote steadiness of mind but *kumbhaka* becomes dangerous when overdone (p. 196). One must be humble. Feeling of superiority builds up the ego and is suicidal for the seeker.

'Concentration precedes meditation, and perfect stillness of the mind follows meditation. For developing concentration, the practice of fixing the mind on any of God's many Avatars or on the sound of His name, is the easiest way.' Swamiji lays great stress on *nāma japa* and the cultivation of love. He does not deprecate *Jñāna* but points out that ultimately *Jñāna* melts into Love.

Both the books are helpful companions to the seeker.

SRI M. P. PANDIT

SPIRITUAL SWEET FRAGRANCE: BY MAJOR K. S. ABDUL GAFFAR SAHEB. Published by Sri Ramana Arunachala Sadhanalaya, LIG 41, Malmaruti Extn., Belgaum (Karnataka). 1980. Pp. 120. Rs. 20.

The author of this book has had varied experiences in the national movement, administration, army and yogic mysticism. He is disarmingly free from all constraints, religious, social or grammatical. Here in this volume he gives an interesting account of his career, his entry into spiritual life, his major experiences and the poems he has been inspired to write.

He did not feel drawn to have the *darsan* of Sri Ramana Maharshi during the lifetime of the sage even though he was very near Tiruvannamalai at that time. It was some ten years after the passing of Bhagavan that he read Mr. Osborne's book on the Maharshi and got interested. 'One day before I slept I asked Bhagavan to give me *darsan*. He gave it to me in the dream. Bhagavan a tall person with loin cloth and stick in the right hand moving on the side of a road. Beside him was a cart full of Light. The cart had four wheels. No one was there anywhere near by to ply it. It is moving on its own, besides Bhagavan.' He decided that Bhagavan was his Guru and started to practise meditation on the teaching that 'there is a Right Heart in everyone of us and in it is the cavity in which, there is Light, this is Brahman.' Whatever the author's understanding of it, his night-long meditations had a spectacular result after eight years. Let him speak. 'Many were the experiences of fires ranging to the head and sweeping all over the body. Suddenly the fires set ablaze to the entire body and they rushed with fierce tongues from the sides to the head above and on reaching immediately both the sides fires converged with force and dipped into the cavity of the Right Heart and the *so'ham sphurana* started working.'

The Major has since retired from the army and settled down to pursue his path and share his experiences with all who are interested. More books are to follow. The sincerity of the author is indeed touching.

SRI M. P. PANDIT

THE BLOOM OF INNER GLORY: BY N. N. RAJAN. Published by the author, Ramana-nagar, Sri Ramanasramam P. O., Tiruvannamalai-606 603. 1977. Pp. x + 84. Rs. 3.

Sri N. N. Rajan who had the good fortune of coming into direct contact with Sri Ramana Maharshi for a long time, has portrayed in this book the spiritual genius of the Maharshi in a scholarly way. The appearance of sages

like Sri Ramana Maharshi on the world scene helps to uplift human experience to a higher dimension and serves to bring a new era of hope in times of crisis when human values are at stake. Sri Ramana Maharshi was not merely a beaconlight to the suffering humanity but an illumined soul, a siddha purusha, speaking from direct knowledge and spiritual experience, a man beyond description in his expression of dignity, greatness, self-control and calm strength of conviction.'

The book under review is a brief but useful documentation of the life and teachings of Sri Ramana Maharshi presented in a way which elicits our respect to the great Master. Sri N N Rajan deserves our congratulations.

PROF. K. S. RAMAKRISHNA RAO

*Head of the Department of Philosophy  
Maharani's Arts College for Women, Mysore*

**LIVING THE LIFE** BY B. P. WADIA  
Published by The Indian Institute of World Culture, 6 B. P. Wadia Road, Bangalore-560 004  
1981 Pp 156 Price not mentioned

Sri B. P. Wadia belonged to a wealthy Parsi family and was one of the founders of the United Lodge of Theosophists in India which has branches in Bombay and Bangalore. The former publishes the well-known journal *Aryan Path* and the latter manages the Indian Institute of World Culture. The book under review is published by the Institute to commemorate the birth centenary of Sri Wadia. It contains thirty articles written by the author during his anonymous editorship of the *Theosophical Movement*, a monthly magazine started in 1930 and which is still being published regularly.

Each article in this volume is complete in itself but the reader notices a thread of continuity from the first article to the last. The first eleven articles contain the basic steps to be 'followed to change and improve their mode of living to follow the Divine Discipline advocated not only by Theosophy but by all the great master Teachers who have appeared on the world scene and to walk the way that leads' to the supreme Goal. The remaining articles relate to the high discipline, re-education and transformation that should take place within the individual. These articles also impress on the reader the warmth and kindness and compassion that characterized the personality of Sri Wadia throughout his life.

I strongly recommend the book to students who wish to follow an ideal for a happy and prosperous living.

PROF. K. S. RAMAKRISHNA RAO

**BHAGAVAN SRI RAMANA—A PICTORIAL BIOGRAPHY:** Compiled and designed by JEAN GREENBLATT AND MATTHEW GREENBLATT. Published by Sri Ramanasramam, Tiruvannamalai-606 603 (Tamil Nadu), 1981. Pp. xiv + 108. Price not mentioned

Ordinary people can never get a direct access to the true inner life of an illumined sage. Only the outer events of his life are within the range of their understanding. But since the life of an illumined sage is a totally integral one, his outer life always reflects something of the glory of his inner life. Thus everything he does and says assumes a deep spiritual significance. Even the places, objects and persons connected with his life acquire a new sanctity and importance as having borne witness to the triumphal march of the Spirit. This is what distinguishes the biography of an illumined sage from that of other great men. And when that biography takes a pictorial form, it becomes a permanent re-enactment of the whole drama of spiritual untoldment and the eternal *lila* of the Lord in the heart of the devotee. This is what the book under review has achieved.

Here we find how a simple village lad felt the call of the Divine in the depths of his heart, how in obedience to that call he set out in search of his eternal Father, how he found his final earthly abode and attained the highest spiritual realization, how his benign presence changed a barren hillside into a world renowned centre of spiritual teaching, how his spiritual power transformed the lives of countless people who came into direct or indirect contact with him, and how his silent power still flows as a living tradition at Tiruvannamalai.

The events of Bhagavan Ramana Maharshi's life were not many. For he never left the environs of the Arunachala hill, and his spiritual realization was attained in such a short span of time that it was devoid of the trials, struggles and 'dark nights' which mark the lives of other saints and sages. Nevertheless, all the apparently commonplace incidents in his life have something fascinating about them. There are, however, two points in his life which no one can fail to notice. One is the utter simplicity

of his life, and the other is his pure and selfless love for all those who sought his blessing. Both these aspects have been captured with remarkable fidelity in the pictures of this album. Both the human and divine aspects of the sage of Arunachala intermingle like light and shade throughout the book.

All the pictures have been carefully chosen to give pictorial continuity to the biographical narrative. The overall lay-out, design and printing of this book are of a very high order. All spiritual aspirants will love to possess this beautiful book as a source of perpetual inspiration, spiritual solace and divine promise. An ideal gift book.

S. B.

**HINDU GODS AND GODDESSES** By SWAMI HARSHANANDA. Published by the President, Sri Ramakrishna Ashrama, Mysore 570 002. 1981. Pp. 203+vi. Rs. 7.50.

This is a handy volume containing brief descriptions of 49 Hindu gods and goddesses. A widely read scholar, the author has sought to present the subject before the layman who is unaware of the Agamas and iconography by giving a lucid interpretation of the meaning of symbols, rites, emblems connected with these divinities.

In the brief historical introduction outlining the concept of Godhead Hinduism, Harshanandaji has given an important clarification of the problem of polytheism in Hinduism on the basis of the Vedic mantra *ekam sadviprā bahudhā vadanti* 'Truth is one, but sages call It by various names'. God is one but he is worshipped by many in different ways. Hindus have the freedom to worship God in His different aspects or forms depending upon their inclinations or the traditions they are heir to. It is also true that persons at different levels of spiritual evolution view the Ultimate Principle in different ways. But this does not mean that the different gods and

goddesses are the imaginations of people. God has infinite aspects. He can be contemplated upon through any one of his infinite aspects such as Viṣṇu, Rāma, Kṛṣṇa, Devī, Śakti, Śiva, Kālī and others who are all real emanations of the one Supreme Self. Each Hindu chooses a particular deity for his meditation and worship called his *istadevatā*, but through these different *istadevatās* everyone is worshipping the same one God. Thus though considered individually Hinduism appears to be polytheistic, the Hindu religion as a whole is monotheistic.

The author makes it clear in a simple language that all forms of gods and goddesses of Hinduism have an esoteric meaning. All gods and goddesses are manifestations of one Pure Consciousness or Para Brahman. Every divine form has its effect on the mind and heart of man. If the devotee is imbued with bhakti his contemplation on the icon will lead him on to a spiritual experience, which will eventually free him from the need for such objects. This is the principle underlying the concept of Dhyāna Devatā. A devotee sees his own *istadevatā* (deity) in all the iconographic manifestations of God and this implies absolute unity of God, a philosophically significant concept in the worship of icons.

The description of gods and goddesses of Hinduism is scholarly, yet concise and easily comprehensible by the layman. The last chapter, 'From Gods to Godhead', brings out the metaphysical basis of the relationship between man and God.

Swami Harshanandaji's tireless and meticulous study of the Vedas, Upanisads, Purāṇas, Itihāsas has enriched this work and made it possible for him to write so fluently and clearly. The book is a welcome contribution on the subject and deserves a place in every home and library. The illustrations are well executed and the printer has done a commendable job.

DR. L. V. RAJAGOPAL  
Retired Professor of Philosophy  
Mysore

## NEWS AND REPORTS

### RAMAKRISHNA MISSION GOVERNING BODY'S REPORT FOR 1981-82

*Issued by the General Secretary, Ramakrishna Mission*

Under the Chairmanship of Swami Vireswarananda, the President of the Ramakrishna Mission, the 73rd Annual General Meeting of the Ramakrishna Mission was held at the Belur Math premises at 3.30 p.m. on Sunday, the 9th January 1983. The Governing Body's Report for 1981-82, placed before the meeting, is given below.

Notwithstanding several difficulties and problems cropping up in some of the Mission's Institutions, the dedicated workers remained loyal to their ideals and steadfastly carried on the selfless service activities of the Mission including strenuous relief and rehabilitation programmes in places devastated by the flood, cyclone, drought, and such other calamities.

In the period under report a sum of Rs. 48,71,720/- was spent by the Mission towards (a) Flood Relief in Rajasthan, (b) Cyclone Relief in West Bengal; (c) Distress Relief in West Bengal, (d) Fire Relief in Arunachal Pradesh, (e) Tornado Relief in Orissa; (f) Winter Relief in Rajasthan, (g) Drought Relief in Tamil Nadu; (h) Riot Relief in Bihar, (i) Ardh Kumbha Mela Relief in Allahabad, (j) Medical Relief at Ganga Sagar Mela in West Bengal, (k) also Rehabilitation Work in Andhra Pradesh, Orissa, Rajkot, and West Bengal. Besides, different gifts valued at Rs. 94,952/-.

During this year Math and Mission did considerable Pallimangal (Integrated Rural Development) Work for the economic self-reliance of villagers through Agro-Economic Service, Cottage Industry, Pisciculture, Dairy, Poultry, Goat Rearing, Schools, Small Business and several Mobile Dispensaries. On the whole the project Pallimagal spent Rs. 4,26,383/-.

During the said period the following new

developments took place. A Physiotherapy Department in the hospital at Bombay, an Allopathic Section in the dispensary at Kishanpur, a new building for Blind Boys' Academy at Narendrapur, A Doctors' Quarters at Varanasi, 30 Non-formal Schools at Kamarpukur and a Primary School at Cherrapunji were inaugurated. And also two statues of Sri Ramakrishna were installed--one at Purulia and another at Mauritius.

A mobile medical van of Madras Math (as Mobile Dispensary) based at Nattarampalli started functioning. A statue of Sri Ramakrishna was installed at Kankhal. A large Mansion was acquired by the Vedanta Society of Western Washington, Seattle, and used as its monastery.

In addition to the above, the Mission continued to conduct 9 Indoor Hospitals which served 37,781 indoor patients, 62 Outdoor Dispensaries which treated 38,68,161 cases and 12 Mobile Dispensaries which treated 3,62,436 cases, and also 644 Educational Institutions which had 92,900 students.

The Mission's sister institution, the Ramakrishna Math, had 7,520 students in its 28 Educational Institutions and served 8,34,329 patients through its 24 Hospitals and Dispensaries.

206 Educational Institutions and 49 Hospitals and Dispensaries including Mobile Units, and a large number of Libraries were conducted and various Economic Programmes were implemented in Rural and Tribal areas.

As a follow-up measure of the Second Convention of 1980 and under the direction of 'Sri Ramakrishna-Vivekananda Bhava Prachar Committee' a number of Youth Conventions (Yuva Sammelan) were held in different States.

The Math and the Mission Foreign Centres are engaged in conducting Educational, Medical, Cultural and Spiritual Works including worship, seminars, etc.

Excluding the Headquarters at Belur, the Mission and the Math had respectively 74 and 66 Branch Centres spread throughout the world.



## NOTES AND COMMENTS

### *National Imperatives*

It doesn't need a prophet to predict what the future of India will be at the turn of the coming century. The profile of the nation's immediate future is prefigured in its present socio-economic conditions and political movements. It is already silhouetted in the present national scene.

It is of course quite obvious that India is bound to achieve impressive superiority in at least three fields : technology and industry, agriculture and higher education. In another two decades industry will be wholly built on indigenous foundation and the country will become a major exporter of industrial goods. The present self-sufficiency in food production is likely to be maintained, and the nation may be able to feed double the present population. There will be an overall increase in modern knowledge through higher education, research and mass media.

But the indications are that the nation will have to grapple with serious problems. Some of these problems will be a carry-over of the defects of the past, while some others will be the creations of the present. The history of developing countries shows that economic prosperity and spread of education themselves create discontent and divisive tendencies in society. The major problems India will have to face at the beginning of the twenty-first century will be regarding the following. (1) National integrity. (2) Political instability and the survival of the present pattern of parliamentary democracy. (3) Communal strife. (4) Widening gap between the rich and the poor. (5) Social injustice and exploitation of weaker sections. (6) Increase of violence and crime (7) Social unrest and communism. (8) Materialism and religious fanaticism. (9) Break-down of familial and social cohesion. (10) Depletion of forest and natural resources, pollution and other ecological problems.

In order to cope with these future problems, which are already present in the present society, the nation must prepare itself for the task right now. Fortunately, there is a growing awareness of the danger. The main difficulty, however, is the lack of understanding about the way of dealing with it. There are many people, including industrialists, economists and administrators, who believe that the root cause of all present-day problems is economic and that the attainment of material prosperity through industrialization and higher education is the best solution. There are others, mostly intellectuals, who believe that nothing short of a violent revolution can save the nation. Both these assumptions are naive.

Stupendous historical forces are acting upon the nation, and the handling of these mighty forces calls for deep thinking and concerted action. For more than two thousand years the common people of India looked to the kings—Hindu, Muslim and British—for the solution of their problems. Now they have to evolve it themselves. Given the following moral imperatives, they are capable of achieving it : (1) Truth—in personal conduct, business and administration ; (2) non-violence ; (3) self-reliance ; (4) simplicity ; (5) equality of religious faith and social status ; and (6) cooperation. These are the minimum national imperatives for all Indians.

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SWAMI VANDANANANDA  
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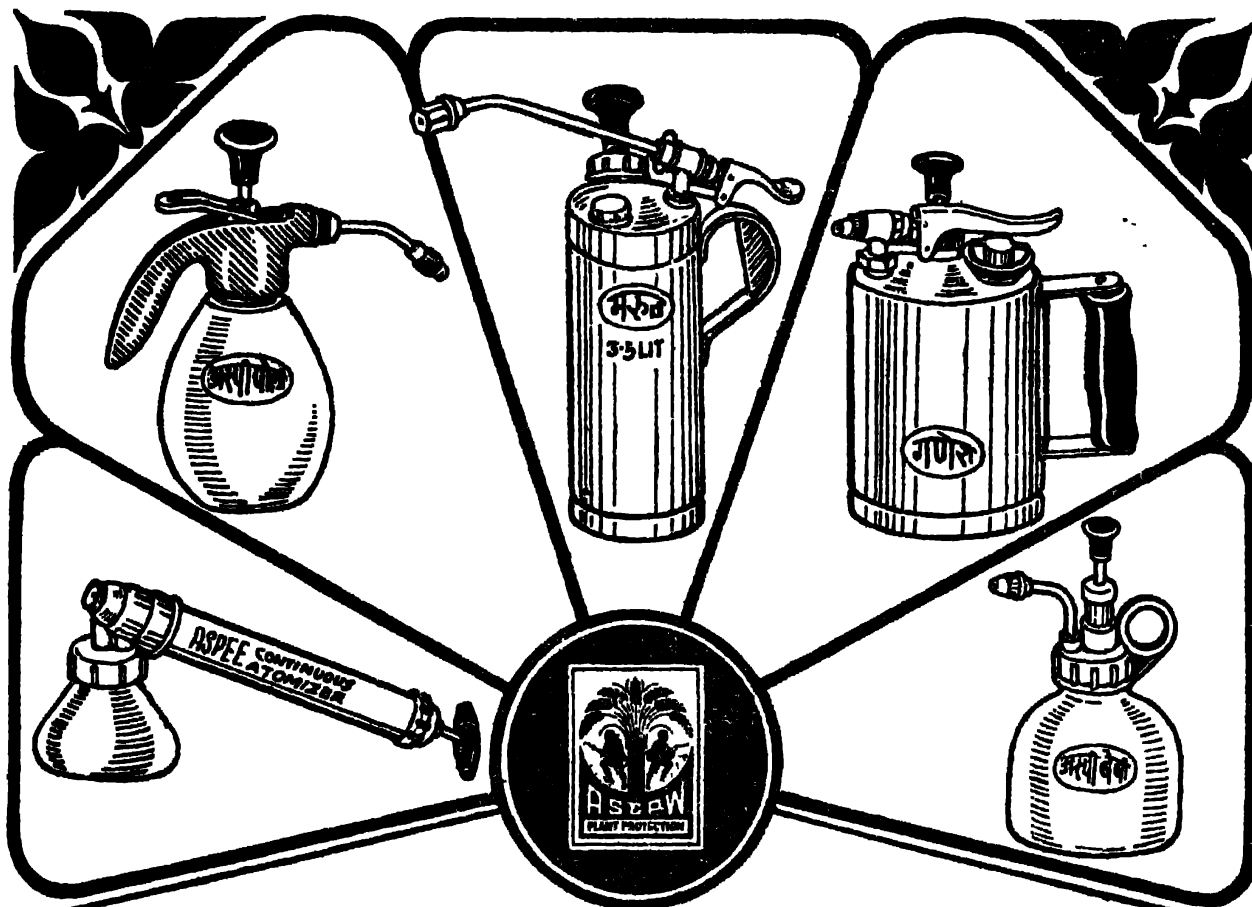
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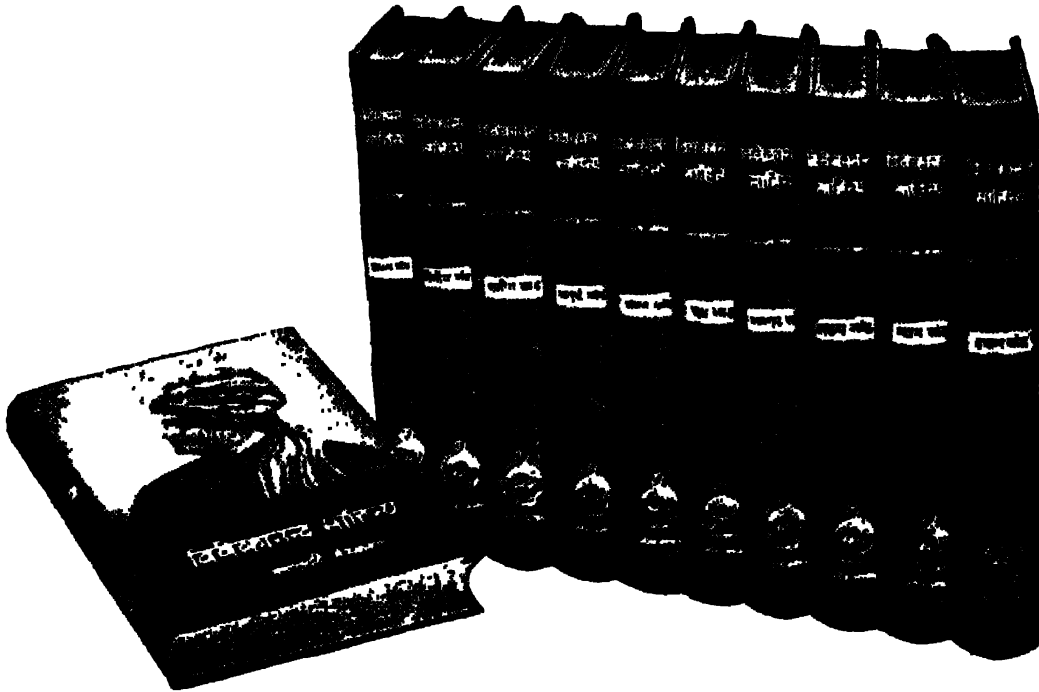
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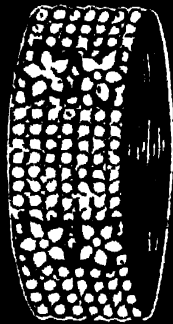
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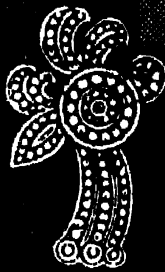
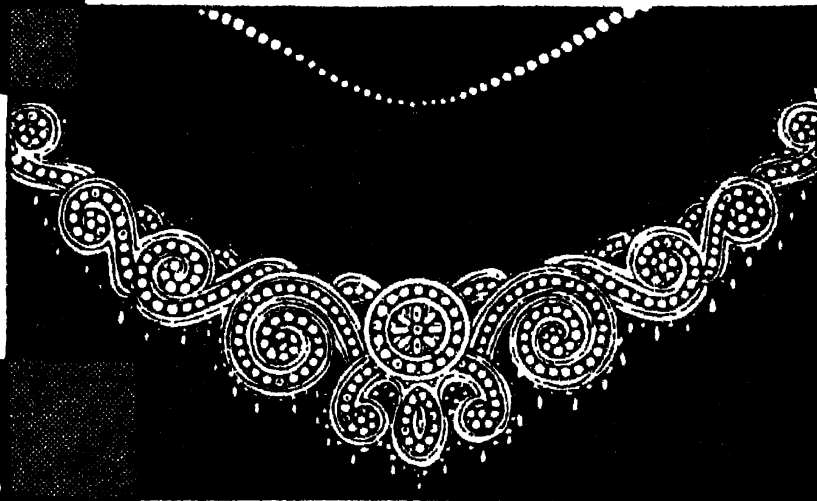
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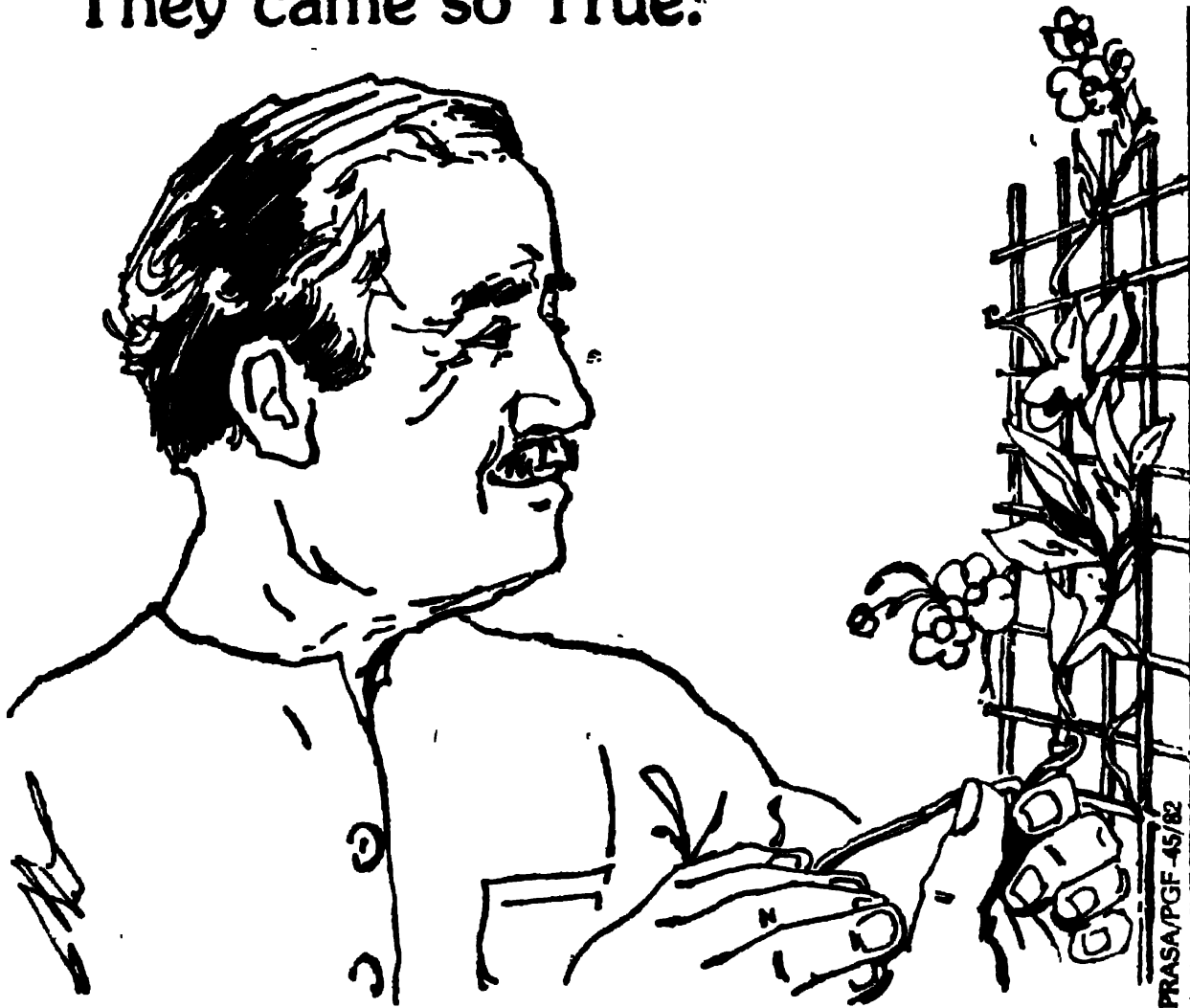
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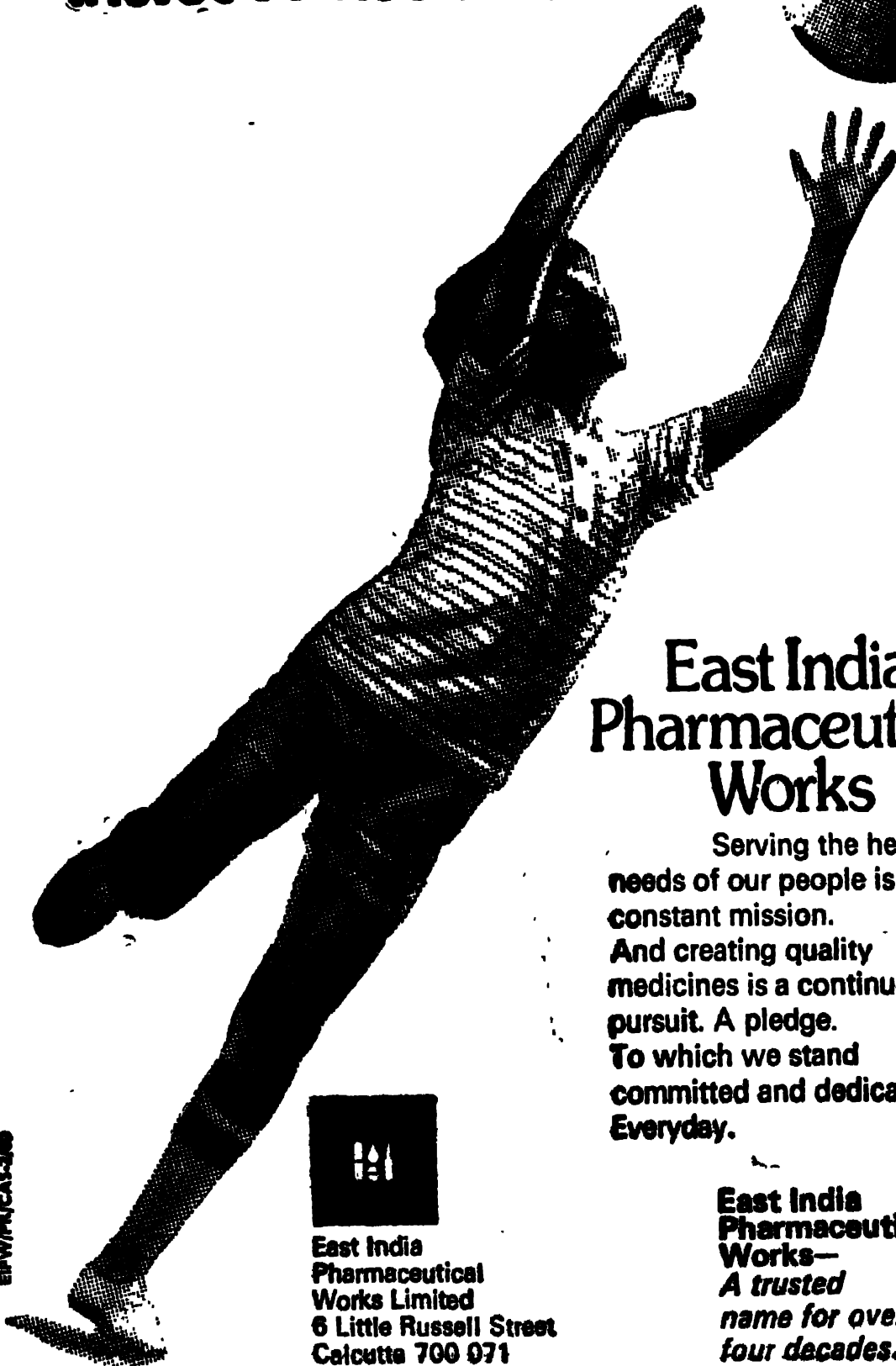
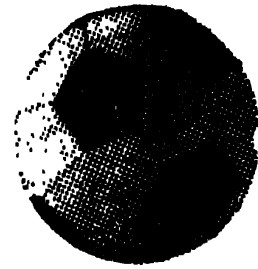
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# Prabuddha Bharata

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Arise ! Awake ! And stop not till the Goal is reached.

## INTEGRAL VISION OF VEDIC SEERS\*

*'Truth is one : sages call It by various names'*

यत् पुरुषेण हविषा देवा यज्ञमतन्वत ।  
वसतो अस्यासीदाज्य ग्रीष्म इध्म. शरद्धवि. ॥

When the gods performed the sacrifice with Puruṣa as the oblation, then spring was used as the ghee, summer as the fuel and autumn as the (cooked-food) offering.

*R̥g-Veda* 10.90.6.

\* *Puruṣa-Sūkta* continued. The whole existence is in a state of flux. Its most dynamic and complex expression is Life which is a self-sustaining, ever-renewing, cyclic movement and transformation of Prāṇa or vital energy. The Vedic seers conceived this ceaseless cosmic rhythm as *yajña*. The word *yajña* does not mean only 'sacrifice', for it is a two-way process: giving and receiving. There is a cosmic *yajña* as well as an individual one. The whole creation, the evolution of the Supreme Spirit into the manifested universe, regarded as a divine Self-sacrifice and dismemberment, is the cosmic *yajña*. Every action of man regarded as a participation in this cosmic process becomes the individual *yajña*. The whole *Puruṣa-Sūkta* is a symbolic dramatization of this cosmo-theanthropic process.

According to Sāyaṇa two types of creation are mentioned in this hymn: a *pūrva sṛṣṭi* or

Primary Creation in which the Supreme Puruṣa embodies Himself as the Virāt Puruṣa and manifests Himself as all the various beings; and a *uttara sṛṣṭi* or Secondary Creation in which food and other materials needed for sustaining life are created. His interpretation of the stanza is as follows. When gods came into existence through the Primary Creation (mentioned in the previous stanza) there were no sacrificial materials. So they performed a mental sacrifice using the Supreme Puruṣa as the oblation. In that mental sacrifice (or meditation) spring was imagined as the ghee, summer as the fuel and autumn as the cooked-food offering.

It should be noted that *grīṣma* (summer) does not occur in any other hymn in the *R̥g-Veda*, while *vasanta* (spring) occurs only in one other hymn.

## ABOUT THIS NUMBER

This month's EDITORIAL is a comparative study of the three main meditation highways developed by the Indian tradition: *Samyama*, *Upāsana* and *Bhāvanā*.

Swami Chetanananda, head of the Vedanta Society of St. Louis, U.S.A., gives a vivid account of the early life and spiritual practice of GOPALER MA one of the great woman-disciples of Sri Ramakrishna.

In the brilliant study AN APPROACH TO VEDIC INTERPRETATION Dr. A. Ramamurty, Reader in the Department of Philosophy and Religion, Visvabharati University, Santiniketan, exposes the inadequacies of the existing interpretations of the Vedas and suggests a more integral approach.

The author's observation that later Hinduism overemphasized the *ādhyātmika* aspect of the Divine is noteworthy.

THE MARVELLOUS BRAIN OF BUDDHA is an interpretative analysis of some of the rare traits of Buddha's character which Swami Vivekananda admired very much. The author Swami Brahmeshananda is a highly qualified doctor at the Ramakrishna Mission Sevashrama, Varanasi.

Swami Atmarupananda of the Vedanta Society of Southern California concludes the account of his visit to Dharamsala in the second instalment of A NEW ALTAR FOR THE FLAME OF TIBETAN BUDDHISM.

## THREE HIGHWAYS OF MEDITATION

(EDITORIAL)

Without his knowledge, every person's life is determined by his view or understanding of reality. And understanding comes from experience. Our earliest experiences in childhood give us our first view or understanding of reality, and this shapes our subsequent thoughts and actions. As we grow and gain more experience, our view of reality changes, and this change alters the course of our thoughts and actions. Thus experience determines our view of reality, which determines our actions and thoughts, which in their turn lead to further experiences.

In ordinary secular life most people are not aware of this cyclic course of their lives and how it is influenced by their view of reality. But in spiritual life one's view and understanding of reality assumes great importance. Spiritual life itself begins only when man wakes up to reality at certain

critical moments in his life. Spiritual life is a search for the ultimate Reality, and the whole life of an aspirant is a constant orientation to this ultimate goal.

The goal determines the means. Every spiritual path or technique is based on a definite view of the ultimate Reality. World religions have opened a number of different spiritual paths. Nowadays books on Yoga, Zen, Kuṇḍalinī, choiceless awareness, etc. are freely available, and there is a widespread tendency to make Sādhana a hotchpotch of diverse techniques. There is of course nothing wrong in assimilating the best points of different paths in one's life. But it should be remembered that Sādhana is a goal-oriented process, and before we attempt to follow a particular path we must gain a clear idea of the *tattva* or nature of the goal on which it is based.

In Indian thought there are three major views regarding the nature of the ultimate Reality. One is the Sāmkhya-Yoga view which regards Prakṛti as the ultimate but ever-changing cause of the whole universe, including individual minds, with the selves (Puruṣas) forming an independent immutable reality unaffected by the evolution and changes of Prakṛti. The second view, held by Vedānta, regards Brahman as the ultimate and unchanging cause of the universe, and the individual selves (Atman) as parts or reflections of Brahman. According to the third view, held by Buddhism, everything is in a state of flux and what appears as the ultimate reality or cause is nothing but emptiness, void, śūnya. Based on these three views of reality, the different types of meditation techniques developed by Indian religions may be grouped under three categories: *Prakṛtyāśraya* (Nature-oriented), *brahmāśraya* (Brahman-oriented) and *śūnyāśraya* (Void-oriented). All the meditation paths are only lanes, tracks and by-roads of these three main highways.

#### *Prakṛtyāśraya meditation*

The Nature-oriented meditation technique is fully developed in the Yoga Aphorisms of Patañjali. In this method the ultimate goal is the realization of the self as completely different and separate from Prakṛti; but this self-realization is attained indirectly by gaining direct knowledge of the different levels of Prakṛti through a series of stages of meditation. In Patañjali's Yōga meditation begins without any preconceived notions regarding the self. Attention is at first paid only to the mind and its functions, and the realization of the true nature of the self is postponed till the end. The fundamental idea behind the *prakṛtyāśraya* meditation of Patañjali is that the main cause of human suffering is ignorance of the true nature of

Prakṛti. It is this ignorance that binds the soul and, as soon as the real nature of Prakṛti is discovered, she herself of her own accord will leave the Puruṣa alone.

The first step in this meditation is Dhāraṇā which means fixing the mind at some point either in the body or outside it. The next step is Dhyāna which means the maintenance of a single *pratyaya* or concept in the mind. The mind functions as three parts or modes or aspects: as the object (called *grāhya*, 'the thing grasped'); as the self or the subject (called *grahīṭṛ*, 'the grasper'); and as the meditative act (called *grahana*, 'grasping') which is really the will connecting the subject with the object.<sup>1</sup> Dhyāna is practised on these three aspects of the mind one after the other. As Dhyāna gets intensified, all the three—subject, object and will—move closer and closer to one another, until at last they get fused together. In this unitive experience the object alone shines, spontaneously without the exercise of will-power, and the subject (the self) appears *as if* (not actually) it had lost its separate identity.<sup>2</sup> This experience marks the third step in meditation known as Samādhi.

The three stages of Dhāraṇā, Dhyāna and Samādhi together constitute meditation in Patañjali's Yoga. He calls it *samāyama* (literally 'total control'); another term, borrowed from Buddhist sources, used by him is *samāpatti* ('absorption').<sup>3</sup> A few important points are to be noted regarding *samāyama*.

In the first place, *samāyama* is a purely objective technique. Every category from gross physical things to the self is objectified, treated as an object for focussing consciousness upon.

1. Cf. Patañjali, *Yoga-Sūtra* 1.41.

2. These three characteristics distinguish Samādhi from Dhyāna. Cf. *Yoga-Sūtra* 1.43 and 3.3.

3. Cf. *Yoga-Sūtra* 3.4 and 1.42.

Secondly, *saṁnyama* is the maintenance of a single *pratyaya* or thought-wave in the mind. When the mind gets purified and concentration becomes deeper, this *pratyaya* becomes clear like crystal and begins to reflect the light of the Puruṣa. This reflected light of pure consciousness is called *prajñā* or *pratibhā*; it is the yogi's power of intuition which reveals to him the secrets of Prakṛti. It is also a kind of inner yoga fire (*yogāgni*) which de-activates the *saṁskāras* (seeds of past experience) by reducing them to the 'burnt-seed' state (*dagdha-bija avasthā*) so that they will not sprout again into thoughts and emotions.

The third point is that *saṁnyama* can be practised on any object or at any place. And, though Patañjali mentions self-surrender to God as an alternative method, no devotional attitude or faith in God is necessary for the practice of *saṁnyama*. There are, however, four planes or levels of consciousness for the practice of *saṁnyama*.<sup>4</sup> The first level called *vitarka* is the external world; here concentration is practised on a gross physical object with open eyes.<sup>5</sup> The second is the level of

*vicāra*, the mental world; here concentration is practised on a mental image or concept or feeling. The third one is the level of *ānanda* (joy)<sup>6</sup> where the will—that is, the mind itself as the grasping (*grahana*) instrument—becomes the object of concentration. At the fourth level called *asmitā* the subject itself is objectified, the focus of consciousness is turned back upon the reflection of the Puruṣa on the *buddhi* or the intellect. Here concentration is practised on the experience of 'I'-ness separated from every other mental or physical object.<sup>7</sup>

*Prajñā*, illumination, is possible at all the four levels mentioned above, but its nature and intensity vary from level to level. At the highest level of *asmitā*, illumination becomes an experience of the total liberation of the Puruṣa from Prakṛti. Yogis call it *viveka-khyāti* or *prasamkhyāna*. According to Patañjali this experience itself consists of seven grades (*prānta-bhūmis*)<sup>8</sup> of freedom. It corresponds to what is called 'liberation-in-life' (*jīvan-mukti*) in Vedānta.

Till now we have been discussing only one type of meditation—that in which an object, in the form of a single *pratyaya* or thought, is maintained in the mind. This kind of meditation-with-object belongs to one of the two divisions of Yoga known as *saṁprajñāta*. Patañjali also mentions an objectless type of meditation in which even the single *pratyaya* is suppressed and the mind becomes completely 'closed'. This

4. *Yoga-Sūtra* 1.17.

5. External concentration is of different types including the *kasina* meditation of Southern Buddhism. In later Yoga books is described a kind of external concentration known as *trataka* practised by fixing one's unwinking gaze on a physical object or point. Crystal gazing is a form of *trataka*. Speaking about his own experience of this kind of concentration, Swami Vivekananda says, 'Once I used to concentrate my mind on some black point. Ultimately, during those days, I could not see the point anymore, nor notice the point was before me at all—the mind used to be no more—no wave of functioning would rise, as if it were all an ocean without any breath of air. In that state I used to experience glimpses of supersensuous truths. So I think, the practice of meditation even with some trifling external object leads to mental concentration.' *The Complete Works of Swami Vivekananda* (Calcutta: Advaita Ashrama, 1976) vol. 6, p. 486.

6. In Vedānta the plane (sheath) of *ānanda* (known as *ānandamaya-kosa*) is considered the highest, but in Yoga the plane of *asmitā* or 'I'-ness (which corresponds to the *viññānamaya-kosa* in Vedānta) is considered the highest.

7. For this technique see, Vyāsa's commentary on the *Yoga-Sūtra* (1.36)

विशोका वा ज्योतिष्मती ।

8. तस्य सप्तधा प्रान्तभूमिः प्रज्ञा ।

*Yoga-Sūtra* 2.27.

is actually not a form of meditation but an object-free state of the mind and is called *asamprajñāta* yoga. The exact nature of this state, its attainment and effects are matters of controversy among commentators and writers on Yoga. According to some, it is the last and ultimate stage of yoga which is to be attempted only after scaling the highest experience of *viveka-khyāti* in *samprajñāta* yoga. According to others, it may be practised at any of the four levels of *śambyama* discussed earlier. After practising concentration and getting *prajñā* at one plane, a Yogi may get stuck there and find himself unable to move to higher planes. In order to overcome this obstacle he suppresses the experience he had gained at that plane. Then for a short period his mind remains closed, free from all thoughts and experiences—the *asamprajñāta* state. When he emerges from this state, he will find himself at a higher plane. It is like diving deep into a river at one point, allowing the river to carry you forward a short distance, and then rising to the surface at another point.

According to this second view, *asamprajñāta* yoga is of two types: 'with-seed' (*śabīja*) and 'without-seed' (*nirbīja*). After attaining some *samprajñāta* experience at the lower planes, a trained yogi can by the use of his will-power make his mind completely thought-free. But this does not mean that his mind will then cease to function. For in the depths of the unconscious there remain the *samskāra* 'seeds' undergoing unknown changes. This kind of *asamprajñāta* yoga is called *śabīja*. It does not last long, as the suppressed *samskāras* break forth into thought waves once again. When, however, after all the 'seeds' have been destroyed through repeated practice and experience, and after the yogi has crossed the seven grades of *viveka-khyāti*, he makes his mind completely thought free, his mind will get closed

permanently. All activities, conscious and unconscious, will cease and the mind will get resolved into its elements and merge into Prakṛti. This is the *nirbīja* form of *asamprajñāta* yoga. Sri Ramakrishna used to say that the body of an ordinary yogi who has attained this highest state will not survive more than twenty-one days, and he will attain final liberation, *kaivalya*. Whether *śabīja* or *nirbīja*, true *asamprajñāta* is not an inert (*jāda*) state of suspended animation as some people consider it to be, but is rather a state of intense awareness. In it the mind is only free from objective experience, but is nevertheless filled with the power of consciousness.

This takes us to the important concept of *nirodha* or suppression which forms the fourth point in our discussion of the yogic way of meditation. Yogic suppression is of three types: *pratyaya-nirodha*, *vr̥tti-nirodha* and *samskāra-nirodha*. A *pratyaya* is a complete thought or concept. It is the form assumed by consciousness at any given time. In ordinary thinking a number of thoughts and emotions crowd into the mind constantly. During Dhyāna only a single thought is maintained, the rest are suppressed. So Dhyāna is a state of *pratyaya-nirodha*, though the suppression is not total. *Vr̥ttis* are the actual expressions or manifestations of *pratyayas*. A *pratyaya* normally consists of three parts or *vr̥ttis*. These are: word (*śabda*), its object or referent (*artha*) and knowledge (*jñāna*). Of these the first two pertain to the object, and the last one, to the subject or the self.<sup>9</sup> In ordinary thinking all these three *vr̥ttis* are mixed up, but in Dhyāna they become distinct and separable. In Samādhi, word-*vr̥tti* and knowledge-*vr̥tti* merge, as it were, into the object-*vr̥tti* which alone remains shining in the mind. Thus Samādhi is a state of *vr̥tti-nirodha*. As long as

9. Emotions are also *vr̥ttis*, which are, however, eliminated before meditation.

there remain *samskāras* in the depths of the mind *nīrodha* or suppression cannot be complete or permanent. Complete *samskāra-nīrodha* results in the total suppression of all *pratyayas* and *vrttis* and leads to the highest superconscious state called *nirbīja-asamprajñāta Yoga*. *Nīrodha* is the very foundation of Yoga, and a clear knowledge of these three types of *nīrodha* is essential for a proper understanding of the yogic way of meditation.

### *Brahmāśraya meditation*

We have seen that the technique of meditation taught in Patañjali's Yoga is called Samyama. Vedantic meditation is called Upāsana. It has two dimensions. The macrocosmic dimension known as *samaṣṭi-upāsana* is the worship of God as the all-pervading Presence. This proceeds in two stages: *virāḍupāsana* or worship of God as the Virāt by serving all living beings through Karma Yoga; and *antaryāmi-upāsana* or worship of God as the Supreme Self of the universe, either through direct intuitive experience or with the help of certain Vedic conceptual frames called *vidyās*. The microcosmic dimension of Vedantic meditation, known as *vyasṭi-upāsana*, is worship of a limited aspect of God through physical or mental symbols. Depending upon the nature of the symbol used, it is of three types: meditation through an image or form (*pratīkopāsana*), through a *mantra* or name (*nāmopāsana*) and through self-identity (*ahamgrahopāsana*). These *upāsana*s were discussed in some of the earlier Editorials. Our intention here is therefore restricted to comparing Upāsana with Samyama.

First of all it should be remembered that Samyama is mostly centred on Prakṛti, a *jada* or unconscious principle, and gives more importance to the structure and function of the mind than to the principle of consciousness. But in Upāsana con-

sciousness is a fundamental principle from the beginning to the end. According to Vedanta, consciousness is not restricted to the individual soul alone but is the basic substratum or Self of the whole cosmos. All living and non-living beings are only manifestations of the one Supreme Self called Brahman which supports, controls and illumines them all. Upāsana is centred on, and oriented to, Brahman.

Secondly, Samyama is a purely objective technique. The different stages in this meditation stand for different types of objects on which the mind is concentrated. Yogic samādhi is defined simply as a state in which the 'object alone shines'. The knowledge of the self enters the field of Samyama only at the advanced stages. But Upāsana begins with an enquiry into the nature of the self and goes straight to the centre of one's Consciousness. In Upāsana the main concern is the transformation of the self and not the various mental processes. Vedanta accepts different dimensions of the self like *viśva*, *taijasa* and *prājña* which are not mentioned in Patañjali's Yoga. The different stages in Upāsana represent the different degrees of transformation of the self. In the Upāsana-Samādhi what is important is not the object but the Self or Atman by whose light the object shines. It should be noted that although Patañjali describes different meditations and experiences, he does not describe the nature of the direct experience of the Self. But in Vedantic treatises Atman experience is clearly described. The Gītā, for instance, says: 'When the mind restrained by Yoga becomes calm, and when seeing the Self by the self, one is satisfied in his own Self.'<sup>10</sup> In a word, Upāsana is a subjective-objective technique.

<sup>10</sup>. यत्रोपरमते चित्तं निरुद्धं योगसेवया ।

यत्र चैवात्मनाऽऽत्मानं पश्यन्नात्मनि तुष्यति ॥

*Bhagavad-Gītā* 6.20,

The ultimate goal of Samyama is the total separation of the self from Prakṛti. This is regarded as a matter of direct experience which is gained only at the highest stage of Samādhi. The ultimate goal of Upāsana is the union of the individual self with the Supreme Self. Separation from Prakṛti, from the hold of Māyā, is only an early step to this union; and it can be attained by the mental process of *viveka* or discrimination between the self and the not-self or between the permanent and the impermanent. It is surprising that Patañjali does not include *viveka* in any of the preliminary disciplines as Vedānta teachers do.

Another difference is that Samyama covers only a limited field of human life—the individual's own experience of concentration. It is essentially an act of withdrawal and, with some unenlightened persons, it may degenerate into a form of spiritual narcissism. Upāsana, on the contrary, is a process of expansion of consciousness. It is not a withdrawal but an active participation in the divine drama of life. Unlike yogic meditation which is restricted to a particular time and place, Vedāntic Upāsana is practised as an undercurrent at all times in all places. It is feeling the presence of God constantly even in the midst of all activities. It thus influences all aspects of life and integrates all experiences of life.

Furthermore, the relationship between the individual and the Infinite that Upāsana brings about is characterized by a feeling of deep devotion. It is not mere concentration as Samyama is, but is a form of worship. In other words, a personal element enters Upāsana which is lacking in yogic meditation.

Another difference lies in the object chosen for meditation. In samyama any concrete form or idea or feeling is good enough for the practice of concentration

which is not governed by a rigid conceptual framework. But Upāsana is done only on some definite aspect of *saguṇa* Brahman, usually a god, goddess or Avatār, known as the meditator's Chosen Deity (*iṣṭa-devatā*). And the procedure is based on definite metaphysical ideas regarding the nature of the deity, of the soul, and of their inter-relationship.

A striking feature of yogic meditation is the absence of the experience of bliss. Though Patañjali casually mentions *ānanda-samāpatti* as a lower form of Samādhi, *ānanda* or bliss as a spiritual experience does not enter the realm of Samyama. Yogic experience is serenity and absence of *duḥkha* or sorrow. On the contrary, the experience of Upāsana is not a mere absence of sorrow but a positive sense of joy. Progress in Upāsana is marked by the attainment of higher and greater degrees of bliss. In the Gītā the experience of meditation is described as both 'disunion of union with sorrow' and 'boundless bliss'.<sup>11</sup>

We have seen that in yogic meditation concentration is essentially a process of *nirodha* or suppression, and the highest stage of Yoga called *asamprajñāta* is a state of complete suppression of all *vṛttis* and their seeds. It is a wholly negative approach. But in Vedāntic meditation concentration is effected through a transformation of consciousness. It is not mere suppression of thoughts, but understanding their underlying causes and sublimating them into higher spiritual urges by stressing the purity and divinity of the Atman.<sup>12</sup>

<sup>11</sup>. दुःखसंयोगवियोगं, सुखमात्यन्तिकं

Gītā 6.23,21.

<sup>12</sup>. Cf 'There are two ways of destroying the mind: Yoga and Jñāna. Yoga is suppression of all thoughts; Jñāna is right insight.'

द्वौ क्रमौ चित्तनाशस्य योगो ज्ञानश्च राघव ।

योगो वृत्तिनिरोधश्च ज्ञानं सम्यग्बोधकम् ॥

Yoga-Vāsiṣṭha



It is a positive approach. Furthermore, at no stage in Upāsana is the mind allowed to remain a vacuum (*vṛtti-sūnya*), for a higher spiritual *vṛtti* is always maintained. The highest stage known as *nirvikalpa samādhi* is itself the result of the rise of an 'unbroken thought wave' (*akhaṇḍākāra vṛtti*). It is a state of highest illumination and bliss, and not a state devoid of all experience as *asamprajñāta* Yoga is.<sup>13</sup>

Like the Nature-oriented meditation (*Samyama*), the Brahman-oriented meditation (Upāsana) too has different stages and results in different types of experience. These will be discussed in their proper context at some future time when we take up the study of the paths of Bhakti and Jñāna.

#### *Sūnyāśraya meditation*

The general term for meditation in Buddhism is Bhāvanā. In the Eight-fold Middle Path of Buddha's original teaching the seventh and eighth steps deal with meditation. Originally the seventh step known as Right Mindfulness or Insight (*samyak smṛti* or in Pali *Sati-paṭṭana*) was intended to serve as a preparation for the eighth step known as Right Concentration or Tranquility (*samyak samādhi* or in Pali *samatha*). But gradually these two steps were treated as independent techniques, and later on many schools began to consider the seventh step (Mindfulness) superior to the eighth step (Concentration).

The technique of Mindfulness (*sati*) is elaborately dealt with in the *Satipattāna* discourse of the *Sutta Piṭaka*, one of the three main Pali scriptures. It is a technique of maintaining constant awareness by watching (*vipaśyana* or in Pali *vipassana*) every movement of the body and mind at

all times of the day. In the above-mentioned discourse of Buddha four types of this 'self-remembrance' technique are described. These are: Mindfulness of the body and its movements, especially breathing (*kāyānupassana*); mindfulness of feelings (*vedanānupassana*); of consciousness (*cittānupassana*); and mindfulness of mental objects (*dhammānupassana*): This practice gradually leads to the state of enlightenment in which the mind disappears and the whole universe appears as emptiness, *Sūnya*. Under the term 'Vipassana' or Insight, this has become the chief method of meditation practised by Southern Buddhists in modern times.

The technique of Tranquility or Concentration (*samatha*), nowadays treated as an auxiliary discipline, requires sitting quietly in one place and fixing the mind on some physical or mental object. Buddhaghosa in his *Visuddhimagga* lists a total of forty subjects for meditation. The most common method is to think intensely of either the dark side of life (*anitya* or impermanence, *dukkha* or sorrow and *anātma* or emptiness of the self) or the bright side of life (*maitri* or love and *karuṇā* or compassion). Concentration on specially prepared clay discs called 'Kasina' is also prescribed and is now becoming popular. The practice of *samatha* (*samādhi*) leads to a state of supersensuous experience known as *jhāna* in Pali (*dhyāna* in Sanskrit)<sup>14</sup> of which there are four (or eight) stages.

There are two major divisions of Buddhism, the Theravada (or Hinayana) and the Mahayana. The meditation techniques described above (which seem to be nearer to the original method taught by Gautama Buddha) belong to

13. It is therefore a mistake to identify or equate *nirvikalpa samādhi* with *asamprajñāta yoga*, as some people do.

14. It should be noted that *Dhyāna* and *Samādhi* in Hinduism correspond to *samatha* (*Samādhi*) and *jhāna* (*Dhyāna*) in Buddhism, respectively.

Theravada, the dominant religion in Sri Lanka, Burma and Thailand. Mahayana Buddhism has a number of schools and sects the most important of which are Vajrayana which is the main religion of Tibet, and Zen which is popular in China, Korea and Japan. Vajrayana makes much use of rituals and is a form of Tantric Buddhism. Zen is a unique system of philosophy and practice which originated in China out of a synthesis of Buddhist Yoga and some aspects of Taoism and Confucianism. It is beyond the scope of the present article to discuss the different meditation technique practised in all these schools.

What is important for our present purpose is to note one point which is common to all forms of Buddhist meditation and which lies at the very foundation of the Buddhist way of life. It is the doctrine of Sunya. This doctrine was originally restricted to the self or soul. It holds that the human personality is nothing but a combination of various elements and that there is no permanent self or soul which undergoes repeated birth, suffering and death. Nāgārjuna extended this doctrine to the whole universe. There are three main philosophical schools in Buddhism. The Southern or Theravada school holds that the world is real; the Yogācāra school holds that the external world is unreal, being a projection of the mind which is real; the Mādhyamika school holds that both the external and internal worlds are unreal, and that everything is a void, non-existence. These three schools differ from one another only in their views about the nature of the world, but they are all agreed on one point—that the self of man is Sunya or void. It is this doctrine of *anātma*, non-selfhood, that is the most distinctive feature of Buddhist thought. Every spiritual discipline in every school of Buddhism is based on this doctrine.

The ultimate purpose of Buddhist meditation is to realize the emptiness of the self. All forms of Buddhist meditation may therefore be characterized as *śūnyāśraya*, Void-oriented.

The above discussion, being restricted to Indian religious systems, has not included Christian and Islamic ways of meditation. Shorn of symbols, myths and theological dogmas which obscure their true nature, these meditation techniques will be found to come under the category of *brahmāśraya*-meditation.

We may now conclude our discussion by stating three points to which it leads. (1) Spiritual experience is produced by a *vṛtti*, and the type of *vṛtti* that rises in the mind depends upon the person's view of Reality and the type of mental training that he undergoes. Hence each technique of meditation leads to a different type of experience. Says Śrī Śaṅkara: 'Through the *bhāva* (feeling) *vṛtti* one gets the experience of devotional ecstasy; through *śūnya-vṛtti* one gets the experience of the Void; and through *brahma-vṛtti* one gets the experience of Fullness or the Infinite. Therefore one should strive to attain Fullness.'<sup>15</sup>

(2) Mere control of mind, suppression of disturbing *vṛttis*, does not by itself lead to true knowledge, which comes only from the Guru—visible or invisible, human or divine. In every age God incarnates Himself as the Avatār to teach mankind the right path to the ultimate goal suited to that age.

(3) Though the different paths lead to different types of experience, it is of course true that all these experiences are only different aspects of one supreme experience of the one Supreme Reality. But this

15. भाववृत्त्या हि भावत्वं शून्यवृत्त्या हि शून्यता ।

ब्रह्मवृत्त्या हि पूर्णत्वं तथा पूर्णत्वमभ्यसेत् ।

*Aparokṣānubhūti*, 129.

truth cannot be understood by comparing the techniques. In the history of mankind the various scriptures. It is a matter of this has so far been actualized only by Sri direct experience which can be attained Ramakrishna. It is a new discovery, a new only by a person who actually practises all revelation, and he was born for it.

*They Lived with God.*

## GOPALER-MA

SWAMI CHETANANANDA

It is hard to believe how the infinite God actually assumes a finite human form and plays with human beings. But this play was actually enacted in the life of a woman devotee of Sri Ramakrishna. She was known as Gopaler-ma, or 'Gopala's mother'. Gopāla, or cowherd boy, is an epithet of the Child Kṛṣṇa. Gopaler-ma's given name was Aghoramani Devi, but she came to be called Gopaler-ma because of her fervent devotion to the infant Kṛṣṇa, which culminated in Lord Kṛṣṇa's appearing before her as a child of seemingly solid physical form. Aghoramani attained this high mystic experience by living a life of austerity and renunciation, and through her steadfast love for her chosen ideal, Gopāla.

One way to approach God, according to traditional Hinduism, is by practising any one of five dualistic attitudes, or moods. These attitudes, or moods, are manifested in the relationship between the devotee and God, and they are: *śānta bhāva*, the peace and stillness felt in the presence of God; *dāsyā bhāva*, the attitude of a servant toward his Master; *sakhya bhāva*, the attitude of a friend toward a Friend; *vātsalya bhāva*, the attitude of a parent toward a Child; *madhura bhāva*, the attitude of a lover toward the Beloved. The idea behind this classification is to

help the spiritual aspirant intensify his relationship with God according to his own inner nature. This is a natural path to God-realization. Gopaler-ma attained her vision of God through the practice of *vātsalya bhāva*, the attitude of a mother toward her Child.

Aghoramani Devi was born of a Brahmin family about the year 1822 at Kamarhati, a northern suburb of Calcutta. Following the social custom of child marriage, she was married at the age of nine. Her wedding was the first and last time she saw her husband, for he died before the marriage was consummated, leaving her a widow of fourteen years of age. However, she was initiated into spiritual life by her husband's family guru and, with the child Kṛṣṇa as her Chosen Ideal, she was given the 'Gopāla mantra'. Since a Hindu Brahmin widow does not remarry, the love and energy that Aghoramani would have given her husband and children were diverted toward her beloved Gopāla. It was Divine Providence that her one-pointed devotion was to make of her a saint instead of a faithful housewife.

After the death of her parents she went to live at the temple-garden of Govinda Datta at Kamarhati, where her brother was the priest of the Radha-Krishna

Temple. It was a large estate, located on the bank of the Ganga. Govinda's widow, the owner and manager of the temple, was a very pious woman who lived like a nun. She practised severe austerity, such as sleeping on the floor, bathing three times and eating one meal a day, and observing religious vows, daily worship, Japa, and meditation. She was looking for a companion, and, through her priest, she found Aghoramani, who was of similar nature and spiritual inclination. Aghoramani was also happy to have the opportunity to live in a solitary, holy place on the bank of the Ganga.

Aghoramani was short but well-built, with a tawny complexion and a face that shone with the glow of purity. It is an ancient custom in India for monastics and orthodox widows to shave their heads because they do not care for external beauty, and, following their example, Aghoramani shaved her head. In later years she donned the ochre cloth, the traditional garb of the renunciant.

By selling her jewelry and husband's property, Aghoramani received about five hundred rupees which she invested in securities and left in her landlady's care. With the three or four rupees a month earned as interest on the investment, she had to manage her living. Sometimes the landlady helped her, but from time to time Aghoramani was forced to draw on her capital.

Spiritual life is not a matter of show. The more hidden it is, the stronger and more fruitful it becomes; the more it is expressed, the weaker and more superficial it becomes. For this reason mystics like to remain hidden. Aghoramani, like other mystics, was a person of few words, and she led a quiet, contemplative life in the temple-garden of Kamarhati. Many years later Sister Nivedita described her surroundings:

How beautiful was the Ganges, as the little boat crept on and on! And how beautiful seemed the long flight of steps rising out of the water, and leading up, through its lofty bathing-ghat, past the terraced lawn, to the cloister-like verandah on the right, where, in a little room, built probably in the first place for some servant of the great house at its side, Gopaler-ma had lived and told her beads for many a year... Her own little room was absolutely without comforts. Her bed was of stone, and her floor of stone, and the piece of matting she offered her guests to sit on, had to be taken down from a shelf and unrolled. The handful of parched rice and sugar candy that formed her only store, and were all that she could give in hospitality, were taken from an earthen pot that hung from the roof by a few cords. But the place was spotlessly clean, washed constantly by Ganges-water of her own sturdy carrying. And in a niche near her hand lay an old copy of the Ramayana, and her great horn spectacles, and the little white bag containing her beads. On those beads, Gopaler-ma had become a saint! Hour after hour, day after day, for how many years, had she sat day and night absorbed in them!<sup>1</sup>

The tiny room, where Gopaler-ma spent the greater portion of her life, was at the southwest corner of the building. It had three windows on the southern side through which she could see the Ganga. Inside the room were large earthen pots containing rice, lentils, spices, and other things, which she purchased in quantities to last for six months. Fresh vegetables were bought once a week at the local market. She kept her few articles of clothing in a tin trunk, and her cooking pots and pans were neatly stacked in one corner. Both her inner life and her outer life were well organized. This is a sign of a yogi.

The scriptures say that the practices of an illumined soul are meant for spiritual aspirants to emulate. Gopaler-ma's life, devoid of comfort and luxury, and filled

1. *The Complete Works of Sister Nivedita* (Calcutta: Advaita Ashrama, 1982) vol. 1, p. 109.

with intense longing for Gopāla demonstrates how essential austerity and concentration are to realization. Thus it is both important and helpful for seekers of God to know such details as the daily routine, behaviour, habits, and mode of life of an illumined soul.

Gopaler-ma rose at two o'clock in the morning, washed her face and hands, then started her Japa, which continued until eight o'clock. Next, she cleaned the Radha-Krishna Temple, washed the worship vessels, picked flowers, and made garlands and sandal paste. She was neat, clean, and meticulous. She would bathe twice a day, mornings in the Ganga and evenings in the pond. After bathing in the Ganga, she meditated for sometime under a Vilva (Bel) tree in the temple-garden. Next, she collected dry wood and leaves for her cooking fire. She usually cooked rice, dal, bitter squash, and potato. Her food offering to Baby Gopāla was worth seeing. She would place a wooden seat on the floor for Gopāla and offer cooked food on a banana leaf-plate which she set before him. Afterward she would partake of the *prasāda* and then rest for a while. She practised Japa again, then, until evening when she would attend the vesper service of Radha-Krishna and listen to devotional singing. Her supper was always very simple, usually consisting of a few offered coconut balls and a little milk. Again she would start her Japa, which continued until midnight. With rare exception, she followed this routine daily for over thirty years—from 1852 to 1883. Perhaps the only break of any consequence in her routine came when she went on a pilgrimage with her landlady to Gaya, Varanasi, Allahabad, Mathura, and Vrindaban.

Swami Ramakrishnananda mentioned an incident which happened shortly before Gopaler-ma met Sri Ramakrishna;

One day she was cooking as usual, but the fire would not burn, the wood was heavy with moisture, and there was an adverse wind which blew the smoke into her eyes. Finally when the bit of rice and curry was done and she was about to pour it out on the leaf, the same adverse wind blew away the leaf. Then she began to scold God for making everything so bad for Gopala. As she was talking, a little boy brought back the leaf, held it out flat on the ground until she had put the food on it and then disappeared. She began to feed her Gopala; but suddenly she began to ask herself who that little boy was and she realized that it was Gopala himself. From that moment she became mad. All day and night she kept crying. 'Where is my Gopala? where is my Gopala?' She could not sleep or eat. Only at night would she prepare a little food for Gopala, and everyone thought that she had really become mad.<sup>2</sup>

By the 1880's Sri Ramakrishna's name had begun to spread, and it was in the fall of 1884 that Gopaler-ma first went to Dakshineswar, along with her landlady and another woman, to seek an audience with the holy man. As Kamarhati and Dakshineswar are both on the Ganga, they went the three miles by boat. Sri Ramakrishna received them cordially, gave them some advice on devotion, and sang a few songs. He asked them to come again, and graciously, in turn, the landlady invited Sri Ramakrishna to visit her temple-garden at Kamarhati. He accepted the invitation.

Only a jeweller understands the value of a jewel. Sri Ramakrishna recognized the spiritual magnitude of both Gopaler-ma and the landlady, and praising them in his sweet manner, he said: 'Ah! What a beautiful expression on their faces! They are floating in the ocean of bliss and devotion. Their eyes are soaked with divine love.' On another occasion Sri Ramakrishna commented about Gopaler-ma, 'During Krishna's incarnation she was a

2. *Message of the East*, vol 9, 1920, p. 163,

fruit-seller of Vrindaban, and she would feed Gopala the sweet fruits.<sup>3</sup>

After her first visit Gopaler-ma felt an irresistible attraction for Sri Ramakrishna, and she noticed a change in her life. Off and on she would think about Sri Ramakrishna. 'He is a nice man and a real devotee.' She decided to see him again soon.

A few days later, while she was practising Japa, her desire to see him became so intense that she immediately left for Dakshineswar by herself. It is an ancient custom that one should not visit God or a holy person empty-handed, so on her way she bought two pennies' worth of stale sweets, which was all that she could afford. She was confident that he would not eat them, since so many people brought better offerings everyday. But no sooner had she arrived at Dakshineswar than Sri Ramakrishna said, 'Oh, you have come! Give me what you have brought for me.' She was embarrassed, but she reluctantly handed over the stale sweets to him. Like a hungry boy he started to eat them with great relish and said to her: 'Why do you spend money for sweets? Prepare some sweet coconut balls, and when you visit this place bring one or two of them with you. Or you may bring a little of the ordinary dishes which you cook yourself. I want to eat your cooking.'

That day Sri Ramakrishna did not talk about God or religion. He only inquired about this food or that food. As Gopaler-ma later related:

I thought: 'What a strange monk. He talks only about food. I am a poor widow. Where shall I get so many delicacies for him? Enough! I shall not come back again.' But as soon as I crossed the gate of Dakshineswar garden, I felt he was, as it were, pulling me back. I could not proceed further. I had a

hard time persuading the mind, and at last I returned to Kamarhati.

A few days later she came to Dakshineswar on foot, carrying some ordinary curry that she had cooked for Sri Ramakrishna. He relished it and said, 'What a delicacy! It is like nectar.' Tears rolled down Gopaler-ma's cheeks. She thought the Master appreciated her humble offering only because she was poor.

During the next three or four months Gopaler-ma visited Dakshineswar several times, always carrying some plain food for the Master. Invariably he asked her to bring some new food on her next visit. Sometimes she would think in disgust: 'O Gopala, is this the outcome of my prayer? You have brought me to a holy man who only asks for food. I shall not come back again.' But as soon as she returned to Kamarhati, she would again feel that irresistible attraction, and her mind would long to see the Master.

At the invitation of Govinda Datta's widow, Sri Ramakrishna went to visit the temple-garden of Kamarhati. He attended the worship service of Radha-Krishna and sang many devotional songs. The landlady and others there were very much impressed, seeing the Master's ecstasy during the *kīrtan*. After taking some *prasād*, he returned to Dakshineswar.

It was the spring of 1885. One morning at three o'clock, Gopaler-ma, as usual, started to practise her Japa. After finishing the Japa she began *Prāṇāyāma* and was about to offer the result of the Japa to her Chosen Ideal when she noticed that Sri Ramakrishna was seated at her left with his right fist clenched. Startled, she wondered, 'What is this? How did he come here at this odd hour?' As she later described:

I looked at him in amazement and thought, 'How did he come here?' Meanwhile Gopala

3. Brahmachari Prakash Chandra, *Swami Saradananda* (Bengali) p. 267.

(as she called Sri Ramakrishna) kept on smiling sweetly. As I took courage and grasped his left hand, Sri Ramakrishna's form disappeared and in place of it appeared the real Gopala—a big child of ten months old. His beauty and look beggar description! He crawled toward me and, raising one hand, said, 'Mother, give me butter.' This overwhelming experience bewildered me. I cried out so loudly that if there had been men around they would have assembled there. With tearful eyes I said, 'My son, I am a poor helpless widow. What shall I feed you? Where shall I get butter and cream, my child?' But Gopala did not listen to me. 'Give me something to eat', he kept on saying. What could I do? Sobbing, I got up and brought some dry coconut balls from the hanging basket. Placing them in his hand, I said, 'Gopala, my darling. I offer you this wretched thing, but don't give me such a poor thing in return.'

I could not perform Japa at all that day. Gopala sat on my lap, snatched away my rosary, jumped on my shoulders, and moved around the room. At daybreak I rushed to Dakshineswar like a crazy woman. Gopala also accompanied me, resting his head on my shoulder. I distinctly saw Gopala's two tiny, rosy feet hanging over my bosom<sup>4</sup>

When Gopaler-ma arrived at Dakshineswar, a woman devotee was present. Her words vividly describe that meeting with the Master.

I was then cleaning the Master's room. It was seven or half past seven in the morning. In the meantime I heard somebody calling, 'Gopala, Gopala' from outside. The voice was familiar to me. I looked and it was Gopaler-ma. She entered through the eastern door like an intoxicated person, with dishevelled hair, staring eyes, and the end of her cloth trailing on the ground. She was completely oblivious of her surroundings. Sri Ramakrishna was then seated on his small cot. I was dumbfounded seeing Gopaler-ma in that condition. The Master, in the meantime, entered into an ecstatic mood. Gopaler-ma sat beside him and he, like a child, sat on her lap. Tears were flowing profusely

from her eyes. She fed the Master with cream, butter, and sweets which she had brought with her. I was astounded, for never before had I seen the Master touching a woman in a state of ecstasy. After sometime the Master regained his normal consciousness and went back to his cot. But Gopaler-ma could not control her exuberant emotion. In a rapturous mood she began to dance around the room, repeating, 'Brahma is dancing and Vishnu is dancing.' Watching her ecstasy the Master said to me with a smile, 'Look, she is engulfed in bliss. Her mind is now in the abode of Gopala'<sup>5</sup>

Gopaler-ma's ecstasy was boundless. Her vision, conversation, and play with her beloved Gopāla continued: 'Here is Gopala in my arms.... Now he enters into you (pointing to Sri Ramakrishna).... There, he comes out again. . Come, my child, come to your wretched mother.' Thus she became convinced that Sri Ramakrishna was none other than her Gopāla.

Only a mystic understands the language and behaviour of another mystic. Sri Ramakrishna was happy to see her ecstasy, but then, in order to calm her, he began to stroke her chest and feed her with delicacies. Even while eating, Gopaler-ma said in an ecstatic mood: 'Gopala, my darling, your wretched mother has led a life of dire poverty. She had to make her living by spinning and selling sacred thread. Is that why you are taking special care of her today?' From this time on Aghoramani Devi was known as Gopaler-ma.

Gopaler-ma stayed the whole day at Dakshineswar, and then, before evening, Sri Ramakrishna sent her back to Kamarhati. The same baby Gopāla went with her, nestled in her arms. When she reached her room, she started to tell her beads as before, but it became impossible. Her Chosen Ideal, for whom she had

4. Swami Saradananda, *Śrī Śrī Rāmakṛṣṇa Lilāprasanga*, in Bengali (Calcutta: Udbodhan Karyalaya, Chaitra-1337) 'Guruhāv-Uttarārdha' Ch. 6, p. 266-7.

5. *Lilāprasanga*, p. 268-9.

practised Japa and meditation all her life, was now pestering her, demanding this and that, as he played in front of her. When she went to bed, Gopāla was by her side. She had a hard bed without a pillow and he began to grumble. At last she cradled his head on her left arm and said: 'My child, sleep tonight in this way. Tomorrow I shall go to Calcutta and ask the daughter of the landlady to make a soft pillow for you.'

The next morning she went to the garden to collect dry wood for cooking. Gopāla also accompanied her and helped her. Then, as she was cooking, the naughty child began to play tricks on her. She tried to control him, sometimes with sweet words, and sometimes through scoldings.

Modern man, inclined to be sceptical and scientific, has great difficulty in accepting as real such experiences as Gopaler-ma's. However, from the traditional Hindu point of view, there are much finer states of consciousness than the one in which we experience the sense world, and this has been substantiated again and again by the experiences of saints and seers. When the mind is pure and saturated with spirit, such high states of consciousness are possible. Gopaler-ma meditated on her beloved Gopāla so much that her mind became very pure. As a result, she entered the superconscious realm, and wherever her eyes fell, she saw Gopāla. In this realm

of mystical experience, verbal expression, mental cognition, and intellectual reasoning do not function. The only consciousness is the direct consciousness of God.

A few days later Gopaler-ma went to Dakshineswar to visit the Master. After greeting him she went to the nahabat, or concert room, where Sri Ramakrishna's spiritual consort, known as the Holy Mother, lived. It was Gopaler-ma's habit to practise Japa whenever she had time and opportunity. While she was doing Japa in the concert room, Sri Ramakrishna came there and said: 'Why do you practise so much Japa now? You have plenty of visions!'

Gopaler-ma replied: 'Shall I not practise Japa any more? Have I attained everything?'

'Yes, you have attained everything.'

'Everything?'

'Yes everything.'

'What do you say? Have I really accomplished everything?'

'Yes, you have. It is no longer necessary for you to practise Japa and austerity for yourself, but if you wish, you may continue those disciplines (pointing to himself) for the welfare of this body.'

Thus assured by Sri Ramakrishna three times, she said, 'All right. Whatever I do henceforth will be for you.'

*(To be concluded)*



# AN APPROACH TO VEDIC INTERPRETATION

DR. A. RAMAMURTY

## *Traditional neglect*

From the period of the Brāhmaṇas down to the present times several attempts have been made, within the Hindu tradition and outside it, to interpret the Vedic Samhitās. Each school of thought has evolved its own method of interpretation, and historically we come across several such methods. The different schools of thought have adopted distinct standpoints of their own, not only with regard to the nature and validity of Vedic revelation, but also in respect of its meaning. However, although the revealed character and authority of the Veda are admitted by all the schools of tradition, the continuous attention paid to the study and interpretation of the Vedānta texts has not been shown to the study and interpretation of the Vedic Samhitās. Certain schools of Hindu thought have developed and maintained the theory of mutual antagonism between the Samhitās and the Upaniṣads in terms of ritualism and knowledge. The theory which regards the Samhitās as standing for ritualism, which is mainly due to the view adopted by these schools that the significance of the Samhitās is tied up with the ritualistic literature of the Brāhmaṇas, has led to the relegation of Samhitās to a secondary position in relation to the Upaniṣads, both in importance and significance.

The meaning of the Samhitās is generally sought to be understood and explained mainly with reference to their relevance in the performance of various religious rites as developed in the Brāhmaṇas. Because of their predominant concern with the notion of Dharma which, according to them, consists chiefly in the proper performance of religious rites and duties and,

as the Veda is viewed by them as the ultimate source of all religious actions, the scholars of the Pūrva-Mīmāṃsā school have not tried to understand the meaning of the Samhitās independently of their ritualistic relevance and significance. The scholars belonging to the different schools of Vedānta have shown little or no interest either in interpreting the Samhitās, or in explaining the positive relation between the Samhitās and the Upaniṣads. Their concern for the Samhitās has been limited to those Samhitā passages which fit in well with their interpretation of the Vedānta texts according to their respective standpoints; and in that they have tried to derive the authority of the Samhitās for their respective positions. Indeed, no systematic attempt was made till the emergence of Sāyaṇa to interpret the Samhitās comprehensively. Most of the other traditional works on the Veda have limited their scope to some of the technical aspects of it, like the nature of its origin and its general validity; and in those cases wherein attempts to explain the meaning of the Samhitās have been made, they are not systematic and comprehensive. Thus in general the concern traditionally shown to the Samhitās has been nothing more than paying them formal and sentimental homage. Beyond this the basic vision informing the Samhitās has not been an object of comprehensive study.

## *The Vedas and the three realms of experience*

Though the Brāhmaṇas form an integral part of the corpus of Vedic literature, they are the earliest historically known attempts at interpreting the Vedic

**Saṁhitās.** However, the peculiarity of the interpretation available in them is that it is not an interpretation for the sake of interpretation. It is chiefly by way of adopting the Vedic *mantras* for religious or ritualistic purposes, which is done with a view to consecrating the life of man in the light of Vedic revelation. The Brāhmaṇas evolved, though not in a systematic manner, several methods of interpreting the Saṁhitās which were later developed individually and systematically. One such approach is to explain the meaning of the Saṁhitās by means of analyzing the meaning of the key Vedic words etymologically. They have also adopted the method of explaining the significance of some of the *mantras* in terms of their mythico-historical content.

But the most significant and enduring contribution of the Brāhmaṇas towards Vedic interpretation is by way of providing a general framework and direction. This they have done by introducing the concepts of *ādhidāivika*, *ādhibhautika* and *ādhyātmika*. Though these concepts are to be found in the Vedic literature in general, they are systematically developed and employed in the Brāhmaṇas. The broad purpose of these concepts is to guide and help our understanding of the meaning of the Veda, as well as to explain the significance and justification of the broad division of the Veda into Saṁhitās, Brāhmaṇas and the Upaniṣads. Their significance lies in the help they render in seeing the sense in which each constituent of the Veda is a revelation of the Divine, or how in its totality the Veda stands to reveal the infinite richness and integral unity of the Divine as it reveals itself in and through its varied manifestations. According to this scheme of interpretation, these concepts, or rather the categories of interpretation, are meant to interpret the nature and meaning of divine revelation

at all the levels of human experience which is broadly categorized into three realms: the realm of deities, who as the primary self-manifestations of the Divine are the inner principles or powers that manifest themselves within the phenomena of nature and govern them; the realm of nature in all its diverse aspects; and finally the realm of human reality.

Now the manner in which the divine revelation is apprehended by man, which also depends upon the form of divine manifestation, is distinct from realm to realm. Nevertheless, the nature of divine revelation remains the same although its apprehension at one level of human experience is distinct from its apprehension at the other two levels. It reveals itself in its infinite richness within all the realms or at all the levels of human experience. The basic approach of the Veda to the problem of man's knowledge of the Divine is not that of speculative understanding whereby its nature is conceived in abstract terms. But to see or realize its presence in all its manifestations which equally reveal its nature. Thus when the basic vision of a tradition is to relate integrally the whole of human experience to its ultimate source, or to see in all that man experiences the presence of the same reality, the attempts at interpreting every area of human experience in terms of the ultimate source will be of supreme significance and value. No sphere of human experience will then be devoid of revelatory value. On the other hand, every aspect of human life, as well as the various areas of his experience gain their true significance in their relation to the Divine.

Now, according to this approach, the Vedic Saṁhitās may be seen primarily as an interpretation of the Divine or an attempt to reveal the nature of the Divine in the realm of deities (*ādhidāivika*), while the Brāhmaṇas are an interpretation

of the same in the realm of nature (*ādhibhautika*), and the Upaniṣads present the nature of the Divine as revealed within the reality of man (*ādhyātmika*). We can thus understand and appreciate the attempts made in the Brāhmaṇas to interpret the nature divinely by way of finding out the identities and correspondences, either real or symbolic, between the Divine in the form of deities and the various elements of nature. And the process of integrating nature with the Divine is sought to be accomplished with the help of the concept of *yajña*. *Yajña*, as representing the process of self-manifestation of the Divine at the phenomenal realm, is Vedic man's endeavour to integrate nature with the Divine, and to consecrate it thereby. The chief object of the Veda as thus conceived by the Brāhmaṇas is to integrate into divine unity what is diversified in the process of the Divine self-manifestation. Each aspect of nature is to be related and integrated with the Divine, so that what is diversified is seen in its inner divine unity. As every experience of man reveals the nature of the Divine, though in its own peculiar manner, no area of experience is divinely insignificant. The appeal of the Upaniṣads, and their immediate spiritual significance to man are however mainly because of their being an interpretation of divine revelation at the level of his own reality. Whereas the revelation of the Divine at the other two levels of his experience may not be as clearly intelligible and immediately significant to man as it is at the level of his experience of his own reality.

Thus the Veda in all its constituents seeks to reveal the nature of the Divine as it is mediated to man in and through distinct realms of his experience. One's inability to see therefore in any of the realms of his experience the presence of the Divine is to miss its infinite richness and

integral unity. Consequently the different areas of human experience remain unintegrated, and one area of experience may assume supreme or exclusive importance and significance over other areas of experiences. It is thus in later Hindu tradition one category of interpretation, the *ādhyātmika* one, and one area of human experience, the inner life of man, have gained supreme importance and significance over others. This has given rise to several types of misconception regarding the significance of the Samhitās and the Brāhmaṇas, as well as to unwarranted attacks on their spiritual worth. It has also resulted in the exclusive concern with the thought of the Upaniṣads, claiming thereby supreme importance to Self-realization, to the neglect, at times with contempt, of the study of the other two realms of human experience; and the general adaptation of a spiritual or subjective approach to philosophical and religious problems. The meaning of Hindu spirituality has thus been narrowed down or reduced to a single dimension and perspective which is decidedly not the case with the Veda. However, by adopting all the three above-mentioned categories of interpretation we not only will be able to understand and appreciate fully the meaning of Vedic revelation, but can also understand the real significance of Vedic deities and their revelatory value.

The Upaniṣads are not an interpretation of the Samhitās, but a continuation of the same revelation; only the form of its presentation is distinct. They express the nature of the Divine as it reveals itself within the being of man. We also find in the Upaniṣads attempts at presenting the nature of the Divine in its abstract nature or in itself through generalized concepts which however presuppose its revelation in concrete living situations. Because of this, much of the symbolism that is peculiar

to Vedic expression is now shed, and the conceptual mode of expression is resorted to. Nevertheless, the Upaniṣads are known more for their *ādhyātmika* interpretation of the Divine. In the Saṁhitās though speculation regarding the nature of the Divine in itself is present, it generally tends towards scepticism. Apart from these differences, which do not concern us here directly, both the Saṁhitās and the Upaniṣads belong to the same genre of literature. Both form the Śruti tradition.

After the Upaniṣadic literature and with the emergence of Smṛti literature, we find different schools of thought evolving their own methods of Vedic interpretation. What is however common to all these schools, which are from within the tradition and are orthodox in character, is that they all have ungrudgingly accepted the revealed character of the Veda, and its infallibility.

#### *Interpretation of grammarians*

The major concern of the school of grammarians vis-a-vis Veda has been to show or establish the general validity and eternality of the Veda by means of explaining the nature and origin of words and their relation to meaning; and in that they made a significant contribution toward understanding the Vedic concept of Vāk. Beyond this they have not gone in explaining the meaning of the Saṁhitās.

#### *Method of etymologists*

The method developed by the school of etymologists (*nirukta*) in interpreting the Saṁhitās is that of analyzing the meaning of individual Vedic words, especially those that are peculiarly Vedic in usage, in terms of their basic roots. They have also tried to formulate the rules that govern such etymological derivations. This method has its limitations. Though Sans-

krit language is older than the Veda, the Veda is the first known literature in Sanskrit. What the words used in the Veda mean, therefore, can best be known only by referring to the Veda. It is the first record of their usage. What the words must have meant in the context of the Veda, or the Vedic intention of their usage, is not so easy to determine independently of their Vedic framework. Whereas the rules of the Sanskrit language and the regulative principles about its usage were formulated much later. In this process the current usage of the language must have been the main guiding principle. Therefore these rules, which are generally helpful in defining the words, cannot, strictly speaking, determine their Vedic meaning. For instance, some of the key Vedic words like, *deva*, *kavi*, *kāvya*, *kratu*, *ṛṣi*, *vāk*, *go* etc., the proper grasp of whose meaning will be of invaluable help in comprehending the meaning of the Saṁhitās, do not carry with them the same meaning in their Vedic and non-Vedic usages. Much of their Vedic connotation is lost in later usage, and new meanings or shades of meaning are acquired by these words.

This is not however to deny the help the etymological definition of words can render in understanding the meaning of the Saṁhitās, as the language in its growth retains to a large extent its basic structure. Only the usage need not be a determining factor in understanding the Vedic usage. Further, the possible meanings a word can have cannot all be derived from a single root. On the other hand, the various meanings a word can have can best be known in the light of its usage in different contexts, as well as in the total context of the thought. Besides, how a word stands to mean different things cannot be explained satisfactorily in terms of a single root. To avoid this, if we adopt

different roots to derive different meanings of a word, the attempt to explain the meaning of words etymologically will not be of much significance. All the meanings of a word cannot be explained on the basis of the same root. This difficulty has been recognized by the etymologists themselves, and therein lies their significant contribution.

Moreover, the etymologists cannot be regarded as free from their own doctrinal presuppositions in analyzing the meaning of words etymologically. Most of the key Vedic words are used symbolically to communicate the truths of revelation, whereas in their ordinary usage they are meant to convey their plain sense. Thus in both the cases the intention of their usage and their referent need not be the same. Most of the words are used in the Veda to convey a sense which they are not supposed to do ordinarily. The words of ordinary usage are employed in the Veda, not with the intention of communicating ordinary experiences of mankind, but with their help to communicate an experience which is uncommon. Therefore the Vedic usage of most of the words is symbolic. The attempts either at paraphrasing the Samhitās into current idiom of Sanskrit, or in translating them into a foreign language involve, therefore, an element of interpretation which is practically unavoidable as the Samhitās are not simply a piece of Sanskrit literature in which some empirically known and verifiable reality is described.

People have often tried to derive the meaning of a word from different roots giving rise to the impression that the process of such analysis is pre-determined in terms of what one is trying to derive. Often thinkers with distinct standpoints of their own have tried to derive different meanings from the same word by tracing it to different roots. This makes the

problem more complicated, and at times confused. Instead of trying therefore to determine the meaning of a word solely in terms of uncertain roots, or in terms of its later usage, its Vedic meaning can be grasped by observing how each word behaves in all the contexts of its Vedic usage, as well as in the total context of Vedic thought or vision. The meaning of the words or concepts cannot be understood individually or in isolation of total thought. What the individual words can mean is also largely determined by the totality of the context. Words help to understand the thought, and equally the thought helps to determine the meaning of words. Although the words retain their basic meaning structure which can be known either by looking into their actual usage or in terms of their root definitions, they also acquire a special sense, especially when they stand to communicate non-empirical experiences, in terms of the total context of thought. Understanding a language is not the same as comprehending the thought expressed through that language, though understanding of language is a necessary condition for understanding the thought. Of course, it is true that only with the help of the meaning of the individual words we can arrive at the total picture of thought; but the latter, when it is grasped, which involves more than knowing the meaning of individual words, also helps in determining the meaning of individual words. Thus with the help of the same words different thinkers with different perspectives try to communicate their basic vision, and in doing so they give their own sense to the words or concepts. This is true with every philosophical thinker. And this is more so when the language is used to communicate revealed experiences. Thus the meaning of a word is also to be determined in terms of the total context of thought.

In determining the meaning of some of the Vedic words, some of the Western interpreters of the Veda sought to find help in the cognate languages of Sanskrit. How far can these cognate languages shed light on the meaning of Vedic words? There are words common to these languages, but as their number is so insignificant their value in illuminating the meaning of Vedic language is negligible. The presence of common words in more than one language need not necessarily imply their common origin. Moreover, the general orientation of thought, and the direction it has followed in the course of its development of which Sanskrit language is the vehicle of expression are not the same elsewhere or with those who think and express themselves in terms of cognate languages. For example, what is there either in the root meaning of the word Agni, or in its ordinary Sanskrit usage, or as it is used in other cognate languages to indicate its divine nature? How are we to explain on the basis of these principles of interpretation the various epithets that are attributed to Agni, both adjectively and substantively, such as *kavi*, *vipra*, *ṛṣi*, *pracetasa*, *jātaavedasa*, *īśvara* or *ina* etc., which stand to reveal its divine nature? Only the phenomenal aspect of Agni, as the principle of heat or an element of nature is all that can be known by this process, but not the divine nature of Agni which is the primary concern of the Veda.

#### *Pūrva Mīmāṃsā interpretation*

Ritualistic or rather religious (Yājñika) approach to Vedic interpretation, or interpretation of the Saṁhitās to serve the practical religious needs of man, initiated in the Brāhmaṇas was later developed systematically and fully by the Pūrva-Mīmāṃsā school. Basic to this approach is the view that the primary

object or intention of the Veda is religious action. Accordingly the meaning of the Saṁhitās is viewed and explained in relation to the performance of religious rites and duties. Even though a distinction is made by the school of Pūrva-Mīmāṃsā between descriptive and injunctive statements, the Saṁhitās comprising the former type of statements (the descriptive statements) are, however, meaningful, according to it, only in so far as they lead to or inspire action directly or indirectly. This is based on its general understanding of the nature of language, according to which, a statement to be meaningful should intend some action. Thus according to this school of interpretation, the meaning of the Saṁhitās is secondary to or dependent upon religious action. Now the problem whether the intention of the Vedic *mantras* is primarily to help perform various religious rites and duties, or to communicate the nature of the Divine as revealed, is of basic importance in deciding the issue whether the meaning of the *mantras* is secondary to or dependent upon the performance of religious rites, or they have a meaning of their own which can be known independently of religious action.

It is one thing to adapt the Vedic mantras to ritualistic or religious purposes, and quite another to think that they are intended primarily for that purpose. Apprehension of truth and man's response to it are two distinct things, though they may go together. Now if we view the object of the Veda as primarily to communicate the nature of the Divine as revealed, then in understanding its meaning we need not necessarily view it in relation to the practical religious needs of man. In other words, the religious action need not necessarily be the primary intention of the Veda. Then instead of the Saṁhitās gaining their significance in terms of the religious life of man, it is the religious life of man

that obtains its meaning in the light of Vedic revelation. Thus how man responds to divine revelation, or how he plans and organizes his religious life in its light, is a different problem, and has no logical relation to the understanding of the meaning of revelation. While religious action is a means to an end, apprehension of truth is an end in itself. Thus when faced with the problem of explaining the divine nature of the deities, or why the various deities are seen as divine, though representing the various phenomena of nature, the school of Pūrva-Mīmāṃsā has no satisfactory explanation, and has resorted to various sorts of naturalistic interpretation.

Sāyaṇa who mostly followed this method of interpretation has however made an attempt to understand the meaning of certain *mantras* independently of their ritualistic significance. He has tried to understand the meaning of those distinct *mantras* in the light of the Upaniṣads. But thereby he has not achieved much, for interpretation of only a few of the *mantras* according to the Upaniṣadic thought does not fit in well with the general trend of his interpretation. And he has not done anything to reconcile and integrate those exceptional *mantras* with the general thought of the Veda as interpreted by him. Such an approach would naturally give rise to the view that the Veda has no unity of thought or vision to which he himself would not have subscribed.

### *Historical method*

The school of historical interpretation which is the one that has been followed in modern times by Tilak and some other scholars, both Indian and Western, and which in its wake has given rise to the 'Aryan-Dravidian' controversy, is an attempt to interpret the Veda as a his-

torical account of a struggle, either between primitive people and their hostile environment over which they had no means of control or mastery, or a racial hostility and conflict between powerful migrating invaders and the natives. Though there are some historical elements here and there in the Veda, they cannot be construed as the primary object of the Veda. Its spiritual significance and philosophic worth are totally overlooked by this kind of interpretation. This method of interpretation which is present within the Brāhmaṇas was later fully made use of in the Purāṇic literature. However the Purāṇas have not lost sight of the symbolic character of the events described in the Veda, most of which do not occur in empirical space and time, or in concrete historical situations.

These traditional schools of Vedic interpretation have kept in view, though partly, the tradition developed subsequent to that of the Veda. They have not completely overlooked the help the later Hindu tradition, especially the Upaniṣads, can render in understanding the meaning of the Saṁhitās. However, they have made no systematic and significant attempts to see and appreciate clearly the organic or logical continuity between the Saṁhitās and the later tradition, either philosophical or religious, in respect of both content and direction. Failure to recognize the integral unity and logical continuity of Hindu tradition, which has its foundational beginnings in the Saṁhitās, has given rise to the antagonism between the two schools of Mīmāṃsā (the Pūrva and the Uttara or Vedānta) and has continued to influence the Hindu tradition.

### *Modern interpreters*

Most of the modern approaches to Vedic interpretation are laden heavily

with the basic presuppositions of the modern thought, and are influenced by the modern world views. In India Dayananda Saraswati is the only person who made an attempt to interpret the Vedic *Saṃhitās* in the proper sense of the term. But his approach was guided by the religious demands of the day, as well as certain other considerations and even prejudices which would not allow one to be really free and objective in his approach. Among other things, he adopted a rigid fundamentalist position with regard to the Veda, and hence dogmatically denied any value to tradition in understanding the meaning of the Veda. According to him, tradition instead of being a source of elucidation of the sense of the Veda is a positive distortion of Vedic thought. In all this he was guided by certain extraneous considerations.

The other creative thinker who took keen interest in interpreting the Veda is Sri Aurobindo. His approach too has its limitations. In the first place his is not a systematic approach. But in the modern times he has provided certain insights valuable in understanding the possible meanings of Vedic symbolism. Instead of relying so much on the root definitions of key Vedic words, he tried to understand their meaning at a higher or spiritual level, in that they stand to signify, though symbolically, the deeper spiritual experiences of mankind. Above all he offered a perspective as well as a direction for understanding the meaning of Vedic symbolism. He is also the first one to see the continuity and integral unity of Hindu thought of which the Veda is the foundational beginning. According to him, understanding the meaning of the *Saṃhitā* is of much help to understanding the Hindu tradition, and vice versa. On the other hand, attempts to understand the Veda by itself or in isolation of

tradition, and likewise to understand the tradition independently of the Veda, would not be significant and fruitful. Also thereby the real significance of both may be lost. Nevertheless, because of his excessive emphasis on psychological or even mystical approach to the Veda, his interpretation of it tended to be one-sided. His approach therefore may not be of much help in understanding most of the *Saṃhitā* passages.

The other Indian scholars who have worked on the Veda have either accepted in toto the Western interpretation of it and followed the methods adopted by them, or generally interested themselves with some highly technical problems which are of interest mainly to the students of Sanskrit language and literature. In either case they have not concerned themselves with the problem of comprehending the general philosophy or the basic vision of the Veda. As the Vedic studies are mainly carried out in the departments of Sanskrit which have little or no interest in grappling with the problem of general thought or philosophy of the Veda, and as there are no separate schools to study the Veda, the Vedic studies have received very scant attention from the Indian academic community.

In modern times, the work done on the Veda in the West is more thoroughgoing and sustained than that done in India. But in general the Western scholars in pursuing their studies on the Veda are not able to rise above or free themselves from the presuppositions which are basic and peculiar to their tradition. One such presupposition is that the Veda, as the earliest literature of mankind, reflects the primitive man's problems and aspirations, as well as the basic structure of his thought. As reflecting the primitive man's understanding of himself and of the world, the Veda when properly interpreted will be



immensely helpful in knowing the workings of the primitive mind, especially in the sphere of religion. Thus their concern for the Veda is primarily for its historical importance. Also they tried to find in it a direct literary evidence or rather confirmation of some of the pet theories of modern man about the origin of religious beliefs and philosophic speculation. The presence of philosophic insights of a higher order in the Veda which they have recognized, are however, according to them, an exception in a literature which is otherwise primitive. Thus in general the Western scholars have failed to see any continuity and unity between the Veda and the highly evolved later Hindu tradition, and hence tried to understand and interpret the Veda in isolation. They viewed the Veda by itself. To study and interpret the Veda independently of tradition means that the Hindu tradition subsequent to the Saṃhitās, which is a continuous and living one, has not much to do with the Saṃhitās either in thought content or in general direction. This line of thinking has led some to think in terms of borrowig to explain the supposed gap between the Veda and the tradition. Though the Indian thinkers in general have not committed this error, yet they have not tried to explain how the Upaniṣads and the tradition later to them are a continuation of the Vedic thought and vision.

### *Two traditional standpoints*

Now with regard to the general meaning of the Saṃhitās we find two broad views. According to one the Vedic deities are but a deification of the natural phenomena done by the poetic imagination of the Vedic seers. The various Vedic deities, when stripped of their divine attributes poetically superimposed on them, can be

identified as standing for the different aspects of nature. This has been the general conclusion about the meaning of the Saṃhitās, according to one view, both in the past and in the present. This naturalistic interpretation of the Vedic thought also fits in well with the modern theories about the origin of religious beliefs and concepts.

The other view aims at giving a wholly mystical or spiritual meaning to the Vedic deities. The spiritual or *ādhyātmika* interpretation, which originally meant seeing the Divine within a particular realm of human experience, that is within the reality of man, which is equally revealed within the reality other than that of man, and is equally mystical and spiritually fulfilling and significant, is now reduced to mean seeing the Divine solely within the inner life of man. This, as stated earlier, is due to the antagonism developed between the Veda and the Vedānta, and the general preference or bias of later Hinduism for the Upaniṣadic vision of Reality which it has come to regard as the highest attainment of man's spirituality. As thus the divine life has been taken to mean the spiritual unfoldment of man, attempts have been made constantly in later Hindu tradition to interpret every experience spiritually or from the *ādhyātmika* standpoint. The meaning of the Divine is now restricted to the inner spiritual life of man. Consequently every experience of man is sought to be reduced to the spiritual level, or interpreted spiritually to have any higher significance for man, or else is given up. Hence the attempts to explain the Vedic thought in terms of inner or spiritual phenomenon of man.

It is thus that, in both the types of interpretation, those *mantras* and the epithets of the deities which are not favourable to either type of interpretation are either conveniently overlooked or are

distorted to mean and support their respective interpretations. While the naturalistic interpreters lay exclusive emphasis on the phenomenal description of the deities, the mystical interpreters are completely oblivious of the phenomenal character of the deities. Whereas in the *Saṁhitās* no deity is described exclusively in terms of either type of characteristics. A deity is an abode or centre equally of both the types of epithets. We do not find a *mantra* concerning a deity in which it is described either exclusively in terms of its phenomenal character or in terms of its divine nature. Both the aspects are intrinsic to the nature of a deity, and are hence integrally related in the nature of a deity. By overlooking therefore either of the two aspects of a deity it will not be possible to grasp the real meaning of a deity as well as the true meaning of Vedic revelation.

One more peculiarity of the Vedic *Saṁhitās* is their general lack of concern for speculative ideas about the nature of the Divine in itself or in its abstract nature. In all the contexts in which the nature of the Divine in itself is talked about or speculated, such speculation tended towards scepticism. This is generally the tone of speculative *mantras* present in the *Saṁhitās*. Whereas when the Divine is addressed in the form of various deities, either individually or collectively, utmost reverence and devotion are shown, and the felt presence of the Divine is never doubted. Such descriptions are vivid and their tone is highly devotional and the felt certainty of the poet is fully reflected in the *mantras*.

#### *The integral view*

How to explain this as well as the double nature of a deity? To explain these satisfactorily, keeping in view at the same time the general spirit of the Veda, as well as that of Hindu tradition, we have to adopt a philosophical position distinct from the

above two with regard to the meaning of the Veda, and accordingly adopt a new approach. Here we have to consider a basic problem. How is divinity revealed to man, or how does man come to know its presence? Is it revealed to man as it is in itself, or in its abstract nature directly, as if in a vacuum, so that man comes to know the nature of the Divine independently of his experiences either of his own reality or that of the world? Or is it known to man as it gets revealed in and through its varied forms of self-expression? Is it the case that man abstracts the nature of the Divine from what it is as revealed to him in and through his lived experiences and thus forms a general concept of it?

Now the basic approach of the Veda in this regard, as of Hindu tradition in general, which is wonderfully expressed in the tenth chapter of the *Bhagavad-Gītā* ('Vibhūti Yoga') is to see the Divine presence in and through nature of which man is a self-conscious expression. And accordingly the various phenomena of nature are seen as different forms of the Divine self-expression. Thus revelation of the Divine is not limited to the reality of man alone. It reveals itself in and through all that a man experiences as all are equally its manifestations, though the manner of revelation varies from realm to realm, which also depends upon the way in which man apprehends it. On the other hand, those who talk of the Divine in itself, which is more a matter of speculative understanding than of direct seeing, do not see its presence anywhere. It is like seeing humanity without man.

Thus each Vedic deity, as a form of self-expression of the Divine has two aspects. (1) That which is peculiar to each deity, and in terms of which its individual identity is known, and is seen as distinct from other deities; and (2) that which it has in common with all. In the *Saṁhitās*

the divine attributes are common to all the deities, while the phenomenal attributes are peculiar to each deity. The phenomenal attributes of a deity give it its individual identity. While the divine attributes, which are common to all the deities, tend to negate their individuality. In other words, in terms of its divine attributes, the individual identity of each deity tends to merge itself in that of other deities. Hence the Vedic concept of Viśvadeva ('all-gods' or All-God) according to which a deity is conceived as being one with all other deities, as well as the process of identifying each individual deity with other deities. In the *Samhitās*, as well as in the *Brāhmaṇas*, almost all the deities are identified with all other deities.

Now to explain satisfactorily the significance of the double nature of a deity, we have to adopt the position that the deities in their phenomenal aspect represent or reveal the different forms of the Divine self-expression; and as in all these forms the presence of the same reality is revealed, all the deities, in so far as they stand to reveal the felt presence of the Divine, share in common the divine nature. As each form of self-expression of the Divine is distinct from other forms, a deity representing a particular form of expression, is distinct in its phenomenal character from other deities. Thus while there is difference in forms of expression, what is expressed or revealed thereby is the same. Therefore a deity as revelation of divine nature as well as a form of its expression is known as the abode of both. Since the double nature of a deity as well as other problems raised here cannot be explained either in terms of naturalistic interpretation or in terms of spiritual interpretation, they are to be rejected. Moreover, according to these interpretations the nature of the Divine remains a mere idea having no basis or support in human experience.

Finally, since the basic source of Hindu tradition, which is continuous and living, its interpretation should be consistent with the basic spirit of Hindu tradition. Here again we should not assume the position that the Veda as the beginning of the Hindu tradition need not necessarily contain within itself what has been developed and formulated later. Some scholars consider that as the starting point of evolution, the Vedic *Samhitās* contain, if at all, only the rudimentary beginnings of Hindu tradition waiting for development or even fulfilment. Some even think that the later Hindu tradition stands for the rejection of the Veda. According to this line of thinking, there is a gap doctrinally between the *Samhitās* and later Hindu tradition which cannot be explained without looking for other sources. Is it then meaningful to think of the *Bhagavad-Gītā* as a development or fulfilment of the *Upaniṣads*, and the latter as the fulfilment of the Vedic *Samhitās* and *Brāhmaṇas*? If we admit this, then we not only have to compromise with the revealed character of the Veda as traditionally held, but will also have to explain the traditional view that the *Upaniṣads* belong to the Veda integrally. Moreover they themselves proclaim that they continue to represent the same revelation though expressed differently. Unless we have strong reasons against the validity of the traditional standpoint in this regard, and whatever reasons that are offered against it are in the final analysis due to a particular type of interpretation of the Veda, we have to accept the validity of the traditional standpoint.

Therefore the Veda is to be viewed and interpreted in relation to or in line with Hindu tradition, as the same vision and spirit permeate the whole tradition of which the Veda is the fountain-head. As the Veda is to be viewed in relation to

tradition to understand its meaning, so also the tradition is to be viewed in relation to the Veda to understand its significance. The true significance of both can be obtained by understanding each in relation

to the other. On the other hand, by trying to understand them in isolation or independently of each other, we may not be able to understand and appreciate the significance of either.

## THE MARVELLOUS BRAIN OF BUDDHA

SWAMI BRAHMESHANANDA

Among the various prophets and divine incarnations of the world, Lord Buddha was Swami Vivekananda's favourite. Swamiji delivered a large number of lectures and talks on the Buddha. Whether dealing with the historical aspect of Buddhism, or its philosophy, or the life of Buddha, Swamiji never failed to highlight the exemplary character of Buddha which he considered 'the greatest the world has ever seen.'<sup>1</sup>

In his talk, 'Buddha's Message to the World' he says, 'And consider his marvellous brain! No emotionalism. That great brain never was superstitious.'<sup>2</sup> Elsewhere he uses an uncommon word, 'Sanity'. 'See the sanity of the man. No gods, no angels, no demons—nobody. Nothing of the kind. Stern, sane, every brain-cell perfect and complete, even at the moment of death. ... Oh, if I had only one drop of that strength! The sanest philosopher the world ever saw. Its best and its sanest teacher.'<sup>3</sup>

The word 'sanity' appears more often in its negative counterpart—'insanity', which means madness. Therefore the use of this word here has greater significance in stressing the negative aspect of character,

and therefore to appreciate the brilliance of the Buddha's character, we must clearly know the meaning of insanity and what a diseased brain is.

The minds of most of us are almost all the time in a reverie of disconnected thoughts, sense-impressions, irrelevant memories and physical sensations. If we could taperecord the working of the average human mind, it would sound something like this: 'The article. Oh, it's hot today. He is a nice man. I must pay the bill tomorrow. This mosquito nuisance.' Luckily, this thought reverie does not get expressed except in states of maniac psychosis or delirium. It is kept under control by the intellect and the will. Out of this mass of disconnected thoughts, the intellect selects a few and decides to discard the rest, and the will coordinates these into logical systematic thinking. Thus mental reverie is neither expressed, nor allowed to direct the body and the senses into uncontrolled action.

The intellect and the will in turn are influenced by our conscious and unconscious desires and ambitions, emotions and past impressions. Normally all these faculties work harmoniously, being regulated by the intellect and the will. But sometimes the balance is disturbed and, depending upon the duration and severity of this imbalance, there are various grades of insanity. Some people

<sup>1</sup> *The Complete Works of Swami Vivekananda* (Calcutta: Advaita Ashrama, 1972) vol. 7, p. 22

<sup>2</sup> *The Complete Works* (1977) vol. 8, p. 104.

<sup>3</sup> *The Complete Works* (1973) vol. 3, p. 528-9.

are imbecile by birth, born with poor intellect and weak will. They are driven helplessly by their emotions and subconscious urges. Others lose their balance later in life owing to stress and strain and become permanently mad. Persons falling under these categories of congenital or acquired permanent mental disability are not many. But there is a much larger group of people who sometime or other suffer from insanity for months or years. It is estimated that in the U.S.A. alone, one out of every twenty persons goes to the mental hospital sooner or later in life. And the number is on the increase.

Individuals not falling under these two categories of temporary or permanent madness are sufficiently well adjusted to their environment, and they pass as 'normal healthy individuals'. But are they really so? Some psychologists go to the extent of saying that there is nothing like a normal man, and that everyone has some or the other mental aberrations. And there is some truth in this statement. Arjuna's example is an excellent illustration of this. On seeing his own kith and kin ready to kill and be killed on the battlefield, this great hero of the Mahābhārata, the best amongst men, showed signs of neurosis. He started trembling and sweating, his mouth went dry and his bow slipped out of his hand. He started babbling irrelevant words, not befitting his status or the occasion.

Thus, the truly sane person is he who maintains his intellectual clarity and exercises his will-power even under extremes of stress, even at the moment of death. The Buddha, according to Swamiji, was such a perfectly healthy prophet.

The first characteristic of a sane mind, according to Swamiji, is absence of emotionalism. Our approach to problems of life is more often emotional than rational. Criticizing Arjuna's emotionalism, Swamiji

says, 'There is a conflict in Arjuna's heart between his emotionalism and his duty. The nearer we are to [beasts and] birds, the more we are in the hells of emotion. We call it love. It is self-hypnotization. It is not the blind, birdlike emotion that leads to perfection... Now, Arjuna is under the control of this emotionalism. He is not what he should be—a great self-controlled, enlightened sage working through the eternal light of reason.'<sup>4</sup>

The reaction of the Buddha under similar or even more trying situations was quite different. He did not lament or become nervous when two of his foremost disciples, the pillars of his new religious movement, died. Instead, he took the opportunity to teach his disciples the transitoriness of life. He remained unruffled even when confronted with murderers or defamed by opponents.

And yet the Buddha was not without feeling. A clear line of demarcation must be drawn between emotionalism and what is called the quality of the heart which Buddha had in abundance. His large heart felt the pain of every suffering creature. Though both Arjuna's reaction and the Buddha's feeling for suffering creatures can be qualified as *krpā* or compassion,<sup>5</sup> they are poles apart. One is a condemnable weakness, the other the noblest of virtues.

There is a type of emotionalism seen in religion. While genuine emotion is one of the paths (Bhakti Yoga) for God-realization, temporary sentimentalism, bereft of austere renunciation and self-control is dangerous and leads away from spirituality. The emotionalism that does not produce a permanent change in life and give strength to overcome lust, greed and anger, must be discarded. The Buddha was fully aware

4. *The Complete Works* (1977) vol. 1, p. 460.

5. Cf. *Bhagavad-Gītā* 1-28 ; 2-1.

of this. Once a disciple praised him, saying that he was the greatest Buddha ever born. The Buddha asked him whether he knew all about all the Buddhas yet to be born or everything about the present Buddha. The disciple confessed that he did not. At this the Buddha rebuked him, saying that his statement was prompted by blind sentiments and hence foolish. A devotee was often found gazing at the Buddha as if he saw some light on his face. The Buddha did not like it and sent him away.

The second characteristic of a sane mind is absence of superstition. Fear of punishment, hope of reward in this world or in heaven after death, and lack of faith in one's strength and blissful nature lead to misdirected reverence for supernatural beings. While religious superstitions are known, there are also 'scientific' superstitions. Many so-called rational people will blindly accept a statement if it could be ascribed to Einstein, Pasteur or some other renowned scientist. The Buddha would have none of these. He did not want his disciples to accept blindly even what he himself preached. Every prophet is a revolutionary. He demolishes those old faiths and beliefs which become obsolete, but in the process, he himself becomes an idol of worship. The Buddha warned against this. On his death-bed, he told the waiting Ananda, 'Weep not for me. Think not for me. I am gone. Work out diligently your own salvation. Each one of you is just what I am. I am nothing but one of you.'<sup>6</sup> 'Buddha is the name of infinite knowledge, infinite as the sky. I, Gautama, have reached that state; you will all reach that too if you struggle for it.'<sup>7</sup>

The next requirement of a sane mind

is the light of clear reason. Swamiji considered the Buddha 'the sanest philosopher the world has ever seen.' This implies that not only emotional people have aberrations, but rational people may also have eccentricities. Indeed, philosophy has its problems. It often gets reduced to dry intellectualism, a bundle of arguments and counter-arguments which confuse the mind. An impractical philosophy having no bearing on the day-to-day problems of life, according to the Buddha and Swamiji, is unhealthy. Hence the Buddha refused to discuss impractical and unanswerable questions concerning the soul, God, etc. Instead, he based his philosophy on the practical everyday problems of sorrow, its cause and remedy.

The fourth mark of sanity is the strength of will, and this the Buddha had in abundance. But like other faculties of the mind, the will also should be rightly directed. Spiritual practice demands the exercise of great will-power. But if misdirected, it may lead to extremes of self-morification. The Buddha himself had practised several asceticism and realized that it was abnormal. Hence he preached the saner middle path.

Another way in which the will can function is in doing good to others. But this often gets vitiated by ulterior motives like name and fame, reward in heaven etc. The Buddha had no motives. He was ready to give up his life to save animals by stopping a sacrifice, and yet he had no motives. 'Do good because it is good to do good', this was the Buddha's watchword.

The Buddha was a yogi par excellence. His portraits depict him in a yoga posture, meditating. This path of concentration, too has pitfalls. It may get reduced to a few *āsanas* and breathing exercises or the aspirant may get lured by psychic powers. The Buddha was severe on those credulous monks who displayed or gave importance to occult powers. The Buddha laid great

<sup>6</sup>. *The Complete Works* (1975) vol. 3, p. 528

<sup>7</sup>. *The Complete Works* (1972) vol. 4, p. 136

stress on meditation, but at the same time warned that to sit in meditation neglecting the nursing of a sick brother was unpardonable.

Thus the sanity of Lord Buddha lies in avoiding all the eccentricities and perversions possible in the various paths to liberation. He was compassionate but not sentimental, rational but not a dry logician, yogi but not a credulous displayer of occult powers. Above all, he was intensely practical and worked incessantly

for the good of others, without any motive.

Rarely does one find a truly sane devotee, sane philosopher, sane yogi or sane worker. And to find the head, heart, and hand fully and harmoniously developed in a single person is rarer still. The Buddha was such a person. Not only was every cell of his marvellous brain fully developed, it also worked perfectly. That is why Swami Vivekananda has paid him the highest tribute, by characterizing him as the greatest character the world has ever seen.

## A NEW ALTAR FOR THE FLAME OF TIBETAN BUDDHISM

SWAMI ATMARUPANANDA

*(Continued from the previous issue)*

A bit before noon I went to the massive iron gate leading into the Dalai Lama's estate. This gate was always guarded and no one was allowed to enter without special permission. After filling out a form for security purposes, I entered with about forty others. Once inside we presented our forms and passports at different tables, depending upon our nationality. Then we were frisked and finally lined up for the audience. Most of us were from the West, and most of the Westerners were European. There were also a few Indians, and some Tibetans that looked like they had settled in the West. The Tibetans stood first, then the foreigners, and finally the Hindus.

When word was given, the Tibetans—though dressed in the clothes of Western businessmen—bent over low in humility and ran to a circular drive, at one end of which stood the Dalai Lama. Here they threw themselves flat on the ground in salutation, an action which they repeated three times, I believe. Then they quickly went to where he stood, handed an assist-

ing lama the traditional scarf which is given when greeting any respected person in Tibet, and passed on by as the now-blessed scarf was put over their bent necks by another assisting lama. All of this was done with such grace and sincere devotion that it would have to impress even those who think it degrading to bow before another human being.

Then the Westerners walked round the circular drive to where the Dalai Lama stood. Out of respect for the ways of another people and in perfect style he shook hands with each of us, asking each, 'American?' As it turned out, only two of us were. The Hindus then paid respect in their traditional way by 'taking the dust of his feet' as he blessed each of them. Now I understood why the visitors had been divided into three cultural groups, because he responded to each group according to their custom.

We stood at a little distance and watched as the remainder of the crowd paid their respects to the Dalai Lama. He was quite a tall man, slightly stoop

shouldered, with a surprisingly deep but attractive voice and a wonderful look of mingled innocence and wisdom, reserve and kindly openness, bearing his ever-ready smile.

After all had paid their respect and received his blessing, he saluted with folded hands the bowed Tibetans and Hindus and waved his hand in perfect American fashion at the Westerners. Thus ended the public audience. Though it was a brief meeting indeed, the impression of the Dalai Lama which I carried away was that of a man of unusual openness, broad sympathy and tolerance, and the rare ability to identify with the feelings of others. I wasn't surprised to learn later that these are the qualities that strike most who meet him, for they had been so evident.

After lunch at Om, I went to the Library of Tibetan Works and Archives. A day or two previously I had seen a Westerner in the robes of a Tibetan monk. On approaching him to ask where the Library was, I had been nonplussed to hear him reply in a female voice—'he' was actually a Western nun, but because the nuns wear robes similar to the monks and keep their hair close-cropped, it hadn't been immediately evident. Anyway, with her directions I now made my way to the Library, which was a twenty to thirty minute walk from the village.

The Library itself is a large impressive stone building, a blend of Tibetan and modern architectural styles, and painted in the traditional colours: whitewashed, with the doors, windows and decorative trim in rich red, blue and gold. Here they have a public library-reading room with a large collection of books and periodicals on Buddhism from all over the world. A

museum houses over five hundred priceless statues and thangkas from the Dalai Lama's personal collection, among other objects of worship and art, some dating back to the twelfth and fifteenth centuries. The Tibetan Books, Documents and Archives Department holds about 44,000 Tibetan literary treasures, philosophical and psychological treatises, historical works and valuable government documents, including the original sealed documents of Nyari Chogyal, King of Tibet in the tenth century.

Lectures and seminars are arranged and conducted by the Library. And there are courses in Buddhist dharma and Tibetan language which the public may enroll in. A five-year thangka painting course is open to those ready to dedicate themselves to this demanding study. The Library publishes numerous books on Tibetan Buddhism in an effort to preserve their heritage which the Chinese occupation has endangered. Since 1975 it has also published a magazine, *The Tibet Journal*. Many rare Tibetan manuscripts are being reprinted. The Library is thus becoming quite a centre for research, and an effective force in the fight to preserve the Tibetan heritage.

The day before I left Dharamsala I discovered the Tibetan Children's Village, a delightful place founded over twenty years ago for the care of Tibetan refugee children, located quite a long walk through the forest from Macleodganj. From the beginning of his exile the Dalai Lama has been deeply concerned over the plight of Tibetan children. So among his first acts after reaching India was to establish institutions for their care and education. In 1960 his elder sister, the late Tsering Dolma, founded a nursery that was to grow into the present Tibetan Children's Village. After her death in 1964 she was



succeeded by the Dalai Lama's younger sister, Mrs. Pema Gyaltsa.

There was a time when 120 children slept in a room twenty feet by thirty feet. Now the institution has a campus of forty-three acres, a number of buildings, and projects in other Tibetan settlements in India as well. As of 1980 the Village had helped 4,326 resident children, and 1,938 more who had been helped under one of its many projects elsewhere in India. When I visited, the Village had about 1,050 children in residence.

Infants are looked after in a 'Baby Home'. Boys and girls between four to fifteen are divided into about thirty 'homes' of thirty children each. Foster parents look after each of these homes, efforts being made to create as far as limitations allow the atmosphere of a normal Tibetan home. This provides the children with as natural and humanly warm a life as possible. Older children are divided between a boys' hostel and a girls' hostel, each accommodating sixty youngsters.

The Village has its own school, with classes from pre-primary stages to Class X, most of the teachers being Tibetan. Qualified children are sent elsewhere for their further education and training.

The Village also has various longterm projects to help people both there and in other settlements in India. It has started nurseries and day schools, care for old people, an Educational Reserve Fund for scholarships, and various health care projects.

Since 1974 the Village has had a Handicraft-cum-Vocational Training Centre, which was begun with three basic objectives:

(1) to offer job training and employment facilities for those children who could not continue with normal school education, (2) to serve as an instrument for preserving and propagating the traditional arts and crafts of Tibet by training

young people in these fields, and (3) to contribute financially towards the upkeep [of the Tibetan Children's Village] so that it would be less dependent on outside help.<sup>12</sup>

As I walked around the campus I came upon the carpet-weaving section of the Training Centre, housed in a large building where a number of girls and young women were busy at work on various patterns and sizes of rugs. They were all very open, friendly and inquisitive. Seeing my monastic robes they asked in Hindi the inevitable question which had followed me all over India for seven years: 'Are you with Hare Krishna?'

'No, I'm with the Ramakrishna Order founded by Sri Ramakrishna and Swami Vivekananda,' which demanded more explanation. I think that I could have been anything and pleased them as long as I had promised to buy a carpet. And the carpets were beautiful. Luckily someone had given me money to buy just such a gift, so I gained immediate popularity.

Another fascinating department was that of thangka painting, the sacred art of Tibetan scroll painting. Here I found several men—young adults—who were apparently apprentices to an older man. They were quite willing, almost eager, to show me the paintings they were working on, so I was able to see the various stages of production in the art, from the early sketches to the final touch up.

Poor Tibetan art can be very poor—especially portraiture, which sometimes seems more like caricature. But when good, it is not only beautiful but spiritually moving. And the thangkas of these men were excellent—the colours seemed almost alive they were so brilliant, and even the highly detailed paintings had a light and

<sup>12</sup>. Information Office of His Holiness the Dalai Lama, ed., *Tibetans in Exile* (Dharamsala: Information Office, Central Tibetan Secretariat, 1981), p. 59.

airy feel to them. They told me that they paint only on order: you give them the subject which may be of varying degrees of complexity and size, and they execute it, abiding by the traditional canons of the art, which are quite specific. For thangka painting is a sacred art and not a free, imaginative art. At added expense the thangkas are mounted on silk brocade. They are sent all over the world on request.

As I returned through the forest to Macleodganj, I realized that my stay among the Tibetans was almost over. It had been so easy to get here to the Dalai Lama's Lhasa-in-exile; and, for those who had the time, it was so easy to stay and study under highly regarded lamas. Only three decades earlier, however, this would have been next to impossible. Lhasa had then been the Forbidden City. The few Westerners who had succeeded in reaching it had done so with greatest difficulty. Even fewer had succeeded in living in Tibet and studying its religion: great pioneers like Mme Alexandra David-Neel and Anagarika Lama Govinda.

In his memoirs the Dalai Lama writes:

Perhaps the best-known quality of Tibet in the recent past was its deliberate isolation. In the world outside, Lhasa was often called the Forbidden City. There were two reasons for this withdrawal from the world. The first, of course, was that the country is naturally isolated. Until the last decade, the route from the borders of India or Nepal to Lhasa was a journey of two months across high Himalayan passes which were blocked for a large part of the year... Isolation was therefore in our blood. We increased our natural isolation by allowing the fewest possible foreigners into our country, simply because we had had experience of strife, especially with China, and had no ambition whatever except to live in peace and pursue our own culture and religion, and we thought that to hold ourselves entirely aloof from the world was the best way of ensuring peace. I must say at once that I think this policy was always a mistake, and my hope and

intention is that in the future the gates of Tibet will be kept wide open to welcome visitors from every part of the world.<sup>13</sup>

Until the Dalai Lama can return to Tibet and open its doors to the world, he is doing all he can to share the wisdom of Tibet with the world. Swami Vivekananda once said that the age of the esoteric in religion is at an end—not that the spiritual knowledge which has been kept secret will be lost, but that all knowledge will be made available to the world. And with the Tibetan diaspora the last great treasure of esoteric wisdom has been opened to mankind. The Dalai Lama has sent teachers of Tibetan dharma all over the world to share their wisdom, for he has learned 'the bitter lesson that the world has grown too small for any people to live in harmless isolation.'<sup>14</sup>

America alone has numerous Tibetan meditation centres, a wide variety of publications, Tibetan Studies programmes at several universities, monasteries and convents, societies for the preservation of Tibetan culture and for aiding Tibetan refugee settlements in India, and groups for keeping alive the question of Tibetan political autonomy. Some Western authorities on Buddhism have even predicted that Tibetan Buddhism will be to America in the 80s what Zen was in the 60s and 70s.

Fortunately, some of the lamas in the West are aware that intercultural exchange should proceed by a process of discreet assimilation and not imitation. Imitation is always a dangerous process. Asia is presently copying some of the worst aspects of Western culture, and there seems to be little reason to assume that the West will

13. His Holiness, the Dalai Lama, *My Land and My People* (New York: McGraw-Hill, 1962), p. 59.

14. *Ibid.*, p. 87.

necessarily do better if it imitates the East. It is unfortunate that morality is at a low ebb in the West right now when this meeting with Tibet is taking place, because many Westerners are currently jumping to learn tantrik Buddhism for all the wrong reasons. Some Western writers on Tibetan Buddhism even speak of the 'subtle ego of morality' and how tantra destroys it by disregrading all social codes of morality. It is no doubt true that a point comes in spiritual life when relative good and evil both have to be transcended in order to attain freedom, and the subtle age of conventional morality can indeed serve as a bondage—this can be learned from the lives and teachings of a number of saints and sages. The solution, however, is not immorality but transcendence. It is wise to remember Swami Vivekananda's warning: 'When God is worshipped in the "left-handed" way, eventually it leads to degeneration and the obliteration of the race that practises it.'<sup>15</sup> Swami Vivekananda never tired of reiterating that purity of character is the only sure basis of spirituality, and that chastity is the only sure foundation for society.

Tibetans are not only giving out their wisdom to the world: they are also learning much in exchange. Though isolation no doubt fostered intensity and depth of faith, it also inevitably bred a narrowness of vision which translated sometimes as bigotry in the broad context of the world. Even now there are many lamas who hold Buddhism to be the only true religion, and Tibetan Buddhism to be the highest form of Buddhism. There are even a few lamas who hold that full enlightenment can be had only by those born into the Tibetan race. (Presumably they exclude Indians—members of the Buddha's own race—only

because India rejected Buddhism and returned to Hinduism.) Furthermore, though the differences among the four major sects of Tibetan Buddhism are not fundamental but accidental, there is a great deal of animosity among them at times. Certainly, contact with other ways of thinking in the world will expand their sympathy for other paths to truth.

It is important for every people to have the capacity to look critically at themselves, at their beliefs and institutions. This frees them to some extent from blind subservience to the forces of history and cultural evolution and gives them a measure of power to control and direct their further evolution. This critical faculty has evolved somewhat in the West, in India, Japan and other countries that have had to face the attack of alien creeds and cultures—most especially the attack of modern science. In time Tibetans will undoubtedly develop the same capacity. The rigorous mental training undergone by Tibetan monks gives them a solid foundation for such development. This will help them to universalize their teachings by distinguishing the principles from the cultural expression of those principles. And it will open their eyes to the beauty of other systems of thought, making them more effective because more understanding.

On returning to Macleodganj from the Children's Village I went again to the Dalai Lama's temple. There, beyond the temple lay the estate of the Dalai Lama. I couldn't help thinking that he, in some ways, represented the wonderful possibilities latent within the Tibetan race and culture. And I still feel that way. Not that there aren't many other highly evolved men and women among the Tibetans, but he displays certain qualities, certain virtues, certain insights which seem especially important to survival in the modern world.

15. *The Complete Works of Swami Vivekananda* (Calcutta: Advaita Ashrama, 1979), vol. 7 p 26

For one thing, he is universal in his outlook. In his memoirs he writes:

Just as a particular disease in the world is treated by various medical methods, so there are many religions to bring happiness to human beings and others. Different doctrines have been introduced by different exponents at different periods and in different ways. But I believe they all fundamentally aim at the same noble goal. Unity among religions is possible, and in the present state of the world, it is especially important. Mutual respect would be helpful to all believers; and unity between them would also bring benefit to unbelievers, for the unanimous flood of light would show them the way out of their ignorance. To this end, the followers of each religion should know something of other religions.<sup>16</sup>

The Dalai Lama has also called for unity among the different sects of Tibetan Buddhism, stressing the need for tolerance and understanding based on recognition of the common foundation and goal of the various sects.

Time and again he has demonstrated a most unusual degree of honesty in stepping out of his situation—his position and cultural background—to look at it objectively and critically. In spite of all that his people have suffered, he is able to say in all sincerity that 'we Tibetans still have no feeling of hatred for the great Chinese people.'<sup>17</sup> He is even willing to return to Tibet as a private citizen if he receives sufficient assurance that his people will be left free to pursue their religion and maintain their cultural values.

He is aware of the democratic urge of modern man and has drawn up a new democratized constitution for his government. This change has not been forced out of him by the spirit of the times but is based on genuine sympathy for the poor and oppressed, on respect for the dignity of every man and woman.

While striving to preserve Tibet's cultural heritage, he at the same time is preparing to meet the future effectively. As an example, his monks now study not only the traditional learning but also English, science, mathematics, and other fields of modern learning.

Again, these qualities and insights are not found only in the Dalai Lama and absent in other Tibetans; rather he conveniently symbolizes the vitality of the race and its great possibilities. Taking all of these facts into consideration, there seems to be much hope for the Tibetan people, in spite of the fact that they cannot yet return to their homeland.

That night was my last at the Rainbow Hotel. In the morning I paid my bill and checked out. I went once more to the temple, and at noon I had my last meal at Om. The bus left Macleodganj in the mid afternoon, winding its way down the mountain to Dharamsala, then out onto the plains, pointed towards Delhi. I strained my neck as long as I could to see the mountain which held the heart of the Tibetan people in exile. Then we went round a bend and it passed into memory.

16. *My Land*, p. 237.

17. *Ibid.*, p. 6.

(Concluded)

## REVIEWS AND NOTICES

**CONSCIOUSNESS IN ADVAITA VEDANTA:**  
BY DR. WILLIAM M. INDICH. Published by Motilal Banarsidass, 40 U.A., Bungalow Road, Jawahar Nagar, Delhi-110 007. 1980. Pp. 131. Rs. 50.

This is an admirably produced work bringing credit to the author and the publishers.

The author commands an austere philosophical style, expresses himself with great clarity and covers his theme with rare concentration, achieving a surprising economy of treatment. He bases himself on texts of great authority mostly. The book is a real contribution to the understanding of Advaita Vedanta.

The work consists of five compact chapters. The introduction gives the gist of the system of thought under study and presents its focal theme, viz., consciousness. The second chapter—by far the best one—expounds the nature of absolute or transcendental consciousness as argued out in Advaita. The third chapter deals with what is described as 'modified' consciousness, meaning consciousness 'conditioned' by phenomenal misidentification and the hierarchical gradation of levels in it in terms of proximity to the absolute level. The fourth chapter treats of the four states of consciousness, waking, dream, and deep sleep, in their ascending order and concludes with *turiya*, the fourth state in which phenomenal consciousness culminates and loses itself in transcendental or absolute consciousness. The last chapter is a critical evaluation of the basic thesis.

A few critical comments arise naturally. (1) The idea of absolute consciousness as self-revealing or self-luminous is a fundamental one. It needs more clarification than what we are given. That it is self-luminous because it illumines all objects is making a 'transcendental use' of the 'empirical phenomenon' of a subject knowing an external object. That it cannot negate itself can only establish the indubitable existence of 'modified' consciousness, which only can exercise the functions of affirmation and negation. That it reveals itself to itself or knows itself by itself would amount to importing to the totally nondual self *svagata-bheda*, duality of aspects. The author permits himself to make the rather careless statements that 'it is known solely by itself' and that it is 'eternally conscious of itself' (pp. 37, 39). Śamkara explicitly controverts that position in his interpretation of Jñāna

in the Taittirīya definition *satyam jñānam anantam brahma*, and also in his explanation of the *bhūman* of Chāndogya. The Citsukhi definition of self-luminosity hardly rise to the requirement of the problem. Śamkara's criticism of Vijñāna-vāda and the Cārvāka position reitreats the criticism that the self or consciousness cannot know itself (*Br Sū.* 2.2.5.28 and 3.3.30.54).

(2) The account in the third chapter of Pratibimba-vāda, Avacheda-vāda and Abhasa-vāda which figure in the internal polemics of post-Śamkara Advaita could have been easily dropped, as they are not so basic to the discussion on hand and cannot receive full elaboration either. The question whether *manas* is an *indriya* is another such issue, as it pertains to a controversy of later-day Advaita concerned with the exact and ultimate source of liberating knowledge, a topic that does not come up much in the treatise. It could have been conveniently kept out.

(3) Whatever be the mechanics of perception, that it involves knowledge of the identity of the subject and the object is a fundamental proposition of Advaita. Our learned author seems to have been somewhat misled by Prof. Devaraja (p. 73) into thinking that Śamkara does not maintain the position. One solid pronouncement from among others of Śamkara can be cited in support of that transfusion of the subject into the object. The *Taittirīya-Bhāṣya* of Śamkara has it (ch. 2, section 1) *Buddherupādhi-lakṣaṇayā cakṣurādīdvāraih viśayākāreṇa parināminyā ye sabdādya-karavabhasah te ātmavijñānena vyaptah utpadyante*. What Dharmarāja Adhvarīndra and others set forth is outlined in this statement of Śamkara himself.

(4) The more important theme of 'sublatability' as the criterion of the unreal should have been subjected to more consideration, in view of the manifest distinction between variation and contradiction between the creativity of the real and the epistemological nullification of the unreal.

In the fourth chapter a good exposition of the three states of 'modified' consciousness interspersed with parallel ideas in Western thought is offered. The fourth state of *turiya* is well brought out, and it is proper that the idea of *mokṣa* receives adequate consideration in the context.

(5) The last chapter holds forth the greatest surprise to the reader. We are told that the

principal drawback of the entire Advaitic theory is the sharp bifurcation between absolute consciousness and 'modified' consciousness. Two types of monistic thought free from that supposedly disabling tenet, the Hegelian Idealism and the Spiritual Evolutionism of Sri Aurobindo, are brought in as better philosophical alternatives. The criticism is rather brief, and the entire structure of Advaitic thought, built up meticulously in the four preceding chapters, needs to be examined, and that in detail, to enable the comparative estimate to stand. Why select only these two types of modified monism? All the Bhedābheda schools of Vedānta, Kashmir Śaivism, not to speak of Viśiṣṭādvaita, represent such a philosophical reconciliation between appearance and reality. The last critical chapter is, thus, in need of at least as thorough and solid a formulation as the preceding exposition of Advaita which it is suggested to be superceding. We hopefully look forward to a complete working out of this line of thought from the gifted and conscientious author.

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**CLASSICAL SAMKHYA** (An interpretation of its History and meaning): BY DR GERALD JAMES LARSON. Published by Motilal Banarsidass, 40 U.A., Bungalow Road, Jawahar Nagar, Delhi-110 007. 1980. Pp. xv+315. Rs. 60

Dr. Larson has a strong historical predilection and he gives us a second edition of his work on Classical Sāmkhya with a long account of how modern scholars in Indology, both non-Indian and Indian, have laboriously reconstructed the Sāmkhya with varying degrees of merit and also an equally heavy tracing of the system from the dim Vedic beginnings down to the crystallization in the definitive Sāmkhya Kārika of Iśvara-Krishna. That final treatise is condensed once in the beginning, elucidated in the middle and its text and translation are added as an appendix. So much is more or less the old matter of the first edition with a number of helpful alterations and improvements.

The distinguishing feature of the second edition is that it drops the chapter on 'Sartre and Samkhya' of the first edition, and replaces it with a chapter on Śamkara's critique of Sāmkhya and a conjectural rebuttal of that

critique by the Sāmkhya philosopher. This addition calls for many comments. If Indian criticism of Sāmkhya was to be introduced, there was no justification for ignoring the equally powerful efforts in that direction, such as those of Buddhism and Nyāya-Vaiśeṣika. The critique presented is not that of Śamkara but of Bādarāyaṇa. If the critique was extracted from Śamkara's commentaries on the Gita and Upaniṣads, there would be some meaning in attributing them to Śamkara, for those texts do not concern themselves with any attack on Sāmkhya. The present critique follows the Sūtra of Bādarāyaṇa in close verbal proximity and argues that the primordial physical principle of *pradhāna* could not be the creative source of the cosmos. The rebuttal framed on behalf of Sāmkhya is curious. The Sāmkhya is made to protest that his *pradhāna* is no merely physical principle, as it bears within its modifications psychical items such as *buddhi*, *manas*, nay, the entire complex of empirical selfhood. The problem is to account for the moving out of *pradhāna* from its causal state to the manifest world of effects. The psychical complex obtains in the realm of effects. How could what constitutes an effect free the posited cause of its non-productivity of effects including itself? A strange and patently implausible defence is advanced on behalf of Sāmkhya.

This work bears the imprint of a thorough and analytical investigation, its expository task is admirably performed and its format is fine

PROF. S. S. RAGHAVACHAR

**AURA: How to read and understand it.** BY HOWARD ADELMAN and JANET FINE. Published by Somaiya Publications, 172 Mumbai Marathi Grantha Samgrahālaya Marg, Dadar, Bombay-400 001 1980 Pp xi+93 Rs 25.

The author of this book, Howard Adelman, says in his introduction that the book is intended to make it possible for everyone to visualize auras. True to his intention, much effort has been made in this direction in the present writing. The author gives us his own insights into the auric phenomena gained by personal experiences and experiments conducted by him

Aura is understood here as the 'astral or spiritual body' of a living being. According to the author, impressions received by observing and studying the changing auric vibrations that

emanate from people give us clear hints and information regarding a person's education, family background, ability, health conditions and past and future lives etc. At the outset it may seem to be too tall a claim but the author, a practising lawyer, bases his conclusions on the sound ground of verified experiences. Here is an example. Once a patient in a hospital had severe physical pain which could not be diagnosed. In spite of many tests, no answer was found. An auric impression revealed a liver problem and an intensive probe in that area proved a success much to the patient's joy and the doctors' surprise. In this case the author saw the colour of red emanating from this particular part of the patient's body. At a university of Miami Medical School class the author demonstrated auric readings and healings. One study in the university of Wisconsin concluded that with psychic diagnosis, one can get close to a 98% accuracy with no X-ray, dye or other hazards! The author claims to have saved many people from various troubles by correctly reading their auras and suggesting appropriate path of action to follow so that they might avoid the impending pitfalls.

Many attempts have been made to read and understand auras since ancient times. In India two thousand years before Christ the experts in this field had arrived at a definite idea and understanding of auric revelation. Caraka and Susruta, the great teachers of Ayurveda, speak of *chāyā* and *prabhā* that is, shadowy content and colour emanations from living human bodies. According to them each colour in its changing intensity indicates the differing conditions of mind and body and also gives us an insight into the deeper aspects of the personality of man.

The colours which emanate from living being are made of five subtle elements and they have their own characteristic qualities. Of course colours do not exhaust the contents of auras. The eminent American psychist of world-wide fame late Edgar Cayce's opinion in this matter is worth mentioning. He says, 'over a period of years I have built up a system which from time to time I have checked with other persons who see auras. It is interesting to note that in almost all interpretations these other people and I agree. Nature's laws are universal.' Cayce's views are more in conformity with the findings of Kirlian instrument. According to Cayce the aura reflects the vibrations of the soul. The author says that while reading an aura (p. 21) certain messages came through to communicate about the subject. This sounds a little occult which is beyond the reach of analysis.

A detailed programme has been charted out in the present book to help those who want to learn reading auras. Howard Adelman is all the time optimistic in assuming that 'all can read auras'. As necessary qualification for this he recommends a calm mind, an intense faith that one can visualize auras, and meditation. (The author has not felt the necessity of prayer or prayerful mood in developing this faculty.) Using the above mentioned techniques, one can really see and read auras and utilize the inherent ability to cure many illnesses.

The book under review is a useful addition to the vast subject on E. S. P. Significant cover design by Dr. Ramakanta Kini enhances the value of the book.

SWAMI JAGADATMANANDA  
Sri Ramakrishna Ashrama, Mysore

## NEWS AND REPORTS

### RAMAKRISHNA MISSION SEVASHRAMA, VRINDABAN

Report: for April 1981—March 1982

Begun in 1907 as a small homeopathic dispensary, the Sevashrama has now grown into a 121-bed allopathic hospital and an important monastic centre. The hospital has departments of General Surgery, Ophthalmology, Dentistry, General Medicine, and a Homeopathic Outpatient Clinic. The General Surgery Department performed a wide variety of operations; a neurosurgeon is also in the faculty. Facilities exist for conducting electrocardiography, radiography, physiotherapy and laboratory tests. An 8-bed ward is provided for cancer patients. The Emergency Department is a boon to the public, conducting medical and surgical services round the clock. A well equipped Eye Department is a special feature of this hospital. The Pallimangal (integrated rural development) scheme recently introduced started serving poor people free of charge covering 150 villages in Mathura district.

The Nursing School, recently started to meet the acute shortage of nurses in the hospital offers a three-year course in nursing. The first batch of 9 students came out successfully in 1981.

During the period, the Sevashrama treated 2,10,238 outpatients (new: 42,179). All outpatients received free consultation and medicines. It treated 3,242 inpatients and conducted 542 surgical operations. The homeopathic clinic treated 968 cases.

*Future plans:* (a) A modern laboratory to conduct a wide spectrum of tests. (b) An 8-bed intensive care unit with electronic monitor facilities. (c) A 700MA X-ray plant to detect diseases in vital organs. (d) A neurosurgical unit to treat diseases of nervous system like head injuries, brain tumours etc. (e) An incinerator for

the scientific disposal of wastes and prevent the possibility of disease transmission. (f) A modern laundry for quick and hygienic wash.

*Immediate needs:* It should be noted that the Sevashrama does not ask for or receive any Government grant. It depends solely on financial help from the generous public for the maintenance of hospital. Persons desirous of endowing beds in memory of their loved ones may do so by donating Rs. 50,000/- per bed. Or donations may be made for any of the items mentioned in the *future plans* or *pallimangal* activities. The immediate need is to buy certain essential equipments and also to wipe out the accumulated deficit of Rs. 1, 89,889.

### UNITED CULTURAL INSTITUTE (RAMAKRISHNA VEDANTA SOCIETY) HARARE, ZIMBABWE

Report from 14.9.1981 to 5.9.1982

Swami Nisreyasananda, head of the two centres at Lusaka (in Zambia) and at Harare (in Zimbabwe), delivered a number of religious lectures in all the important cities in Zambia, Zimbabwe and South Africa. Birthdays of Sri Ramakrishna, the Holy Mother and Swami Vivekananda were duly celebrated. Prizes were distributed to the winners in elocution competition held among the children of different age-groups in Lusaka. The bulletin *Atmanivedanam* was sent out from Johannesburg Vedanta Society six times a year. Copies of the life of the Holy Mother published free of charge by Roshan Press were distributed among the earnest devotees. The library of the Harare centre was thoroughly re-organized. The centre during the period received a number of gifts in kind like, slide projector, taperecorder, cassettes, clothes etc. from friends and devotees. Plans are being prepared to improve the work in Zambia.



## NOTES AND COMMENTS

### *Internal Colonialism*

More than thirty years have passed since Britain left India bag and baggage. But has the country been rid of colonialism? In a thought-provoking article 'On Alien Political Categories' contributed to the *Gandhi Marg* (No. 47, February 1983) Sri Sunil Sahasrabudhey argues that there exists in Indian society an 'internal colonialism' which is completely indigenous.

According to the author there are two types of exploitation : one, in which a single society is divided into two parts, one exploiting the other ; and another, in which a whole society is exploited by a different society. The first type is found in Western societies. There the society is divided into two classes which do not fundamentally differ from each other in language or culture, and they share a common sphere of production. The basis of exploitation lies in the control of the means of production. Owners of the means of production constitute the exploiting class, while the workers constitute the exploited class. In this form of exploitation the economic aspect is basic and decisive.

The other type of exploitation, which is the one that characterizes the Indian society, is a form of internal colonialism. Here the exploiters and the exploited belong to two different societies which differ from each other in culture, language, right to property and human relationship ; in fact everything is different. And in every sphere the victims of colonial oppression serve the society of exploiters in a way which is not much different from slavery. In India that part of the people which is Westernized, and which has found a place in the system based on Western values and big industry and whose economic condition is improving in this system, constitutes the society of exploiters. It may justly be called *paschimikrit samaj*. Those who are outside this system—who include the depressed classes, the tribals, the uneducated poor who live in villages and all those groups which are outside the national cultural stream—are the oppressed ; they constitute the colonized society. They may justly be called the *bahishkrit samaj*. The wealth, culture and 'progress' of the *paschimikrit samaj* are based on the neglect, poverty and systematic subjugation of the *bahishkrit samaj*.

'Thus', states Sri Sahasrabudhey, 'we can say that today in India the colonial oppression has taken the form of *paschimikrit-bahishkrit* divide.' The concept of class struggle, he observes, applies only to the Western society, and not to Indian society. For class struggle in India would not affect the internal colonialism and the socio-cultural division of society.

Another important observation Sri Sahasrabudhey makes is that the Western-style democracy is based on an atomistic world view, individualism and competition. It should be remembered that parliamentary democracy did not prevent Britain or other European countries from colonizing and subjugating other peoples. By the same token, Western-style democracy in India is not by itself adequate to get rid of its own internal colonialism.

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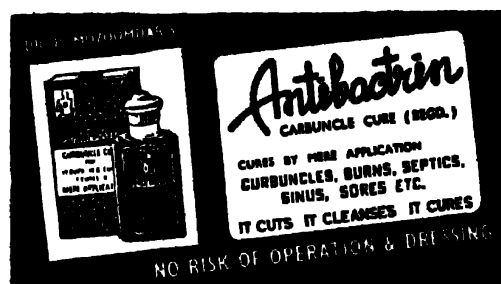
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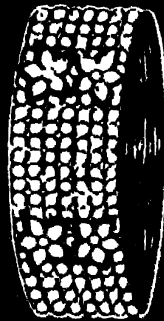
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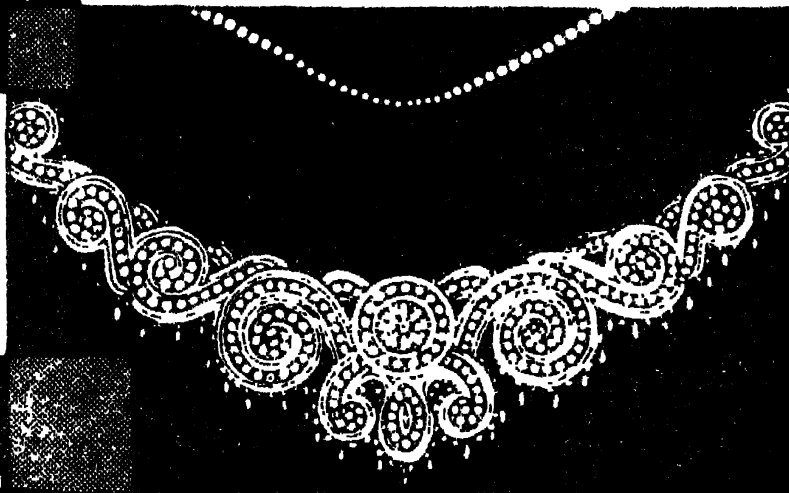
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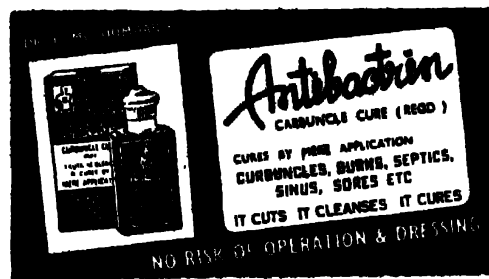
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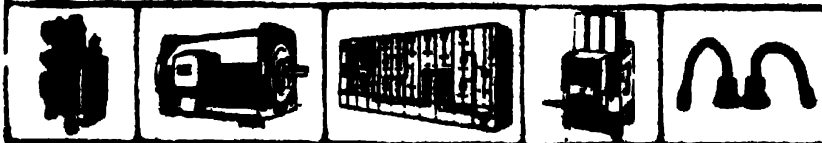
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# Prabuddha Bharata

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No. 5

Arise ! Awake ! And stop not till the Goal is reached.

## INTEGRAL VISION OF VEDIC SEERS\*

*'Truth is one : sages call It by various names'*

तं यज्ञं बर्हिषि प्रौक्षन्पुरुषं जातमग्रतः ।  
तेन देवा अयजन्त साध्या ऋषयश्च ये ॥

1. That Puruṣa<sup>1</sup>, who was born in the beginning, was consecrated on the sacred grass, and was sacrificed<sup>2</sup> by the gods, Sādhyas<sup>3</sup> and Ṛṣis.

*Ṛg-Veda 10.90.7.*

\* *Puruṣa-Sūkta* continued. To understand the hymn it should be kept in mind that two types or dimensions of Puruṣa (God as Person) are mentioned in it. One is the unmanifested primary Puruṣa, the primordial cause, the Inner Controller, Isvara, the Supreme Self. The other is the secondary Puruṣa known as the Virāj appearing as the manifested universe. Similarly there are two creations, according to Sāyaṇa. In the primary creation the Virāj with all its beings arose out of the Primal Puruṣa. In the secondary creation the Virāj produces all the food needed for the maintenance of living beings; this is an unbroken creative activity. Both the creations are regarded as forms of Divine Self-sacrifice. The first creation was mentioned in the 5th stanza, and the second creation in the 6th. In the 7th stanza the imagery of the 6th stanza

is developed further. Here the whole universe is conceived as a vast cosmic sacrificial altar into which the Virāt Puruṣa is invoked and sacrificed by the gods who are parts of the Virāj. The double creation may be compared to a mother's producing the child out of her body and then continually feeding it with the milk derived from her own life-blood.

1. That is, the Virāt Puruṣa, though Sāyaṇa does not clearly indicate which Puruṣa is meant.

2. According to Sāyaṇa, this sacrifice is a purely mental act (*mānasa-yāga*). The whole hymn is meant to be used as a meditation, *upāsana*, on the Supreme Self as the all-pervading Reality.

3. *Sādhyas* means 'competent to perform creation' and refers to Prajāpati and others (Sāyaṇa).

## ABOUT THIS NUMBER

The Vedic *ryis* who had an integral view of life and Reality treated meditation and sacrifice as one discipline. This is the theme of this month's EDITORIAL.

IN WILL-POWER AND ITS DEVELOPMENT Swami Budhananda, Secretary, Ramakrishna Mission, New Delhi, points out that the basic cause of all the small and big tragedies of human life is the inability to develop and exercise will-power. The article, a product of mature thinking and wide experience in spiritual counselling, is only a brief working outline of a larger book now in the press.

BUDDHA'S TRUTH is a lucid analysis of

Buddha's vision and interpretation of Truth. The author Robert P. Utter is a former teacher of English and philosophy at the City College of San Francisco.

Swami Chetanananda, head of the Vedant Society of St. Louis, concludes the second instalment of the life of GOPALER-MA, one of the great woman-disciples of Sri Ramakrishna.

Dr. Umesh Patri of the Department of English, D.A.V. College, Koraput, Orissa, traces HINDU PHILOSOPHICAL INFLUENCES ON THE WRITERS OF EMERSONIAN PERIOD in America like Poe, Melville, Whitman and Whittier.

## MEDITATION AND SACRIFICE—I

(EDITORIAL)

*Social and cosmic dimensions of meditation*

'I want peace of mind', we frequently hear people say. What do they mean by peace of mind? Life is full of uncertainties, conflicts and day-to-day problems, and by 'peace' most people mean a life without these difficulties. But polarity (that is, the occurrence of all experiences in pairs: joy and sorrow, good and evil, love and hate, etc.), impermanence, and ignorance are inseparable attributes of life and, as long as these persist, troubles and afflictions are unavoidable. True peace is not a form of enjoyment, nor is it like sleep. Rather, it is a state of transcendence, remaining unaffected by the polarity, impermanence and ignorance of the world and the pleasures and sorrows that spring from them. Real transcendence is not seclusion or escape, but is the attainment of a higher state of consciousness which harmonizes

all polarities and integrates individual life with universal life. Real peace is thus a state of transcendental harmony.

Peace is not something we get by shouting 'I want peace' or by worrying about peace. It is one of the paradoxes of life that peace eludes the person who hunts for it. Peace is a result, an effect, that follows sincere effort and fulfilment. When we hear the call of the ideal or duty, we cannot get peace until we have responded to it in the best way possible for us. This is all the more true of spiritual life. Supreme everlasting peace is the result of higher spiritual experience which can be attained only through intense effort and struggle, and until it is attained, one of the first things that a spiritual aspirant should do is to sacrifice the illusory peace of mind that mundane life offers.

Genuine spiritual experience is the result of a transformation and expansion

of consciousness. This is what meditation brings about, but it can do this only when the power of the body and mind are coordinated and converted into an intense one-pointed effort over a long period. It is only when we attempt to do this we understand that there are various other forces acting upon us. We then find out that meditation has social and cosmic dimensions.

Meditation is not an isolated activity. It involves the whole personality, and personality is imbedded in the social matrix. The quality, content and effectiveness of meditation depend upon a person's beliefs, attitudes, moods and experiences; and all these are shaped by social forces. He may try to give up external activities, ignore his duties, avoid the company of others. But they continue to exert their influence upon him, and the residues of past experiences burst upon his consciousness during the silent hours of meditation with a force which he can hardly resist. Furthermore, everyone's life is caught in the web of cause-and-effect, the tangle of karmic relationships. The food we eat, the books we read and the innumerable things of daily use are the products of the labour of other people. The karmic effects of these obstruct the unfolding of higher consciousness in us, and bind the soul to the temporal world. The more sophisticated our life is, the more becomes our social obligation and bondage.

One of the main causes of failure in meditative life is the ignorance or neglect of the social forces acting upon human consciousness, and to look upon meditation as a form of escape. Real meditation is a process of transformation of consciousness, and for this it is first of all necessary to recognize and understand the various forces acting on consciousness. If practised properly, meditation itself will reveal the nature of these forces and how to handle them. Forgetfulness or repression is not

the way to deal with them. As the Gita says, 'All beings follow nature, what can repression do?'<sup>1</sup> The social forces when wrongly handled create bondage and obstruction, but when sublimated and connected to intense spiritual aspiration become a constructive force and speed up our spiritual progress. Success in meditation depends to a large extent on our ability to integrate its social dimension into our life and adapting meditation to its demands.

Meditation has a larger cosmic dimension too. It is essentially a mental activity but needs the support of the body, for meditation is difficult when there is no coordination between the two. Both the body and the mind are only the individual manifestations of the universal principle of life known as Prāṇa. The individual is in unbroken contact with the cosmos at the three levels of body, mind and consciousness, and there is a continuous exchange of Prāṇa between the two. When this exchange is defective, it produces illness in the body and either dullness or restlessness in the mind. Under such conditions concentration becomes difficult. Indeed disharmony in the flow of Prāṇa is one of the major obstacles on the path of meditation. Yet most spiritual aspirants have no clear knowledge of the nature of Prāṇa and how it affects their health, thoughts, emotions, work and concentration. If we want to avoid obstacles in meditation, we should learn to live in harmony with cosmic forces at the physical and mental levels.

Thus success in meditative life needs two types of integration: integration between the individual and the society and between the individual and the cosmos. Is there one general principle comprehending both the types of integration? Is

१. प्रकृति यान्ति भूतानि निग्रहं किं करिष्यति ।

there a universal law which governs the interrelationship between the microcosm and the macrocosm at all levels? At the dawn of civilization the Vedic sages pondered deeply over this problem and discovered the principle of Yajña, the Law of Sacrifice. There is a close connection between meditation and yajña.

### Three basic concepts

The Vedas are the embodiment of the holistic vision of life and Reality gained by the Ṛsis. This vision lies at the foundation of Indian culture. All subsequent developments in the realms of values, beliefs, philosophical concepts, moral principles and social life have been an extension and practical application of the original experience of the Vedic Ṛsis. And yet much of it still remains to be understood and actualized. No book, no teacher, no commentator, no Avatār has exhausted all the power, meaning and possibilities of the primordial vision of the Vedas. There are, however, three key words which give us an insight into the integral experience of the Vedic seers. These are: *ṛtam*, *yajña* and *dhi*.

### Ṛtam

The Vedic seers saw Reality as an eternal self-regulating universal order or harmony which is the foundation and essence of all that exists. They called it *ṛtam*.<sup>2</sup> To the sages this is Truth, the ultimate Truth, and to live in tune with it is the true life. (Not to live in tune with it is *anṛtam*, falsehood, false life.) In this integral Reality all distinctions between being and non-being, the absolute and the relative, spirit and matter, cause and effect, the individual and the universal, God and

souls, the sacred and the secular, experience and expression, thought and action, good and evil, joy and sorrow—all differences and contradictions are harmonized and knit into one totality of Existence. It is an existential bond uniting God, man and the universe in one inter-dependent Life, an infinite living organism

*Ṛtam* is not merely Truth or order. It is also a binding law which even the gods follow. It is the moral order of the universe. When we live in harmony with it, we attain supreme peace and blessedness. To live in tune with it is good life, for it avoids contradictions and conflicts, suppression and bondage. It is a life of fullness in which all the faculties and powers of man find full expression, and the potential divinity of the soul finds its full manifestation. It is divine life. So *ṛtam* is not only Truth but also Goodness.

In the Upaniṣads the word *ṛtam* is replaced by the words *sat* and *satya*; both the words mean the ultimate Truth and also goodness, holiness.<sup>3</sup> However the most characteristic feature of the Upaniṣads is the emphasis on *cit*, Consciousness, the inner Self, contrasted with the objective universe. This inner Self known as Brahman is considered to be the sole Reality, though a distinction (without a difference) is often made between the individual self or Atman and the supreme Self. With the emphasis on inner Self and consciousness, man's life lost its integral nature and Reality came to be looked upon as having three realms: the realm of the inner Self (*ādhyātmika*), the realm of external or physical objects (*ādhibhautika*) and the realm of gods (*ādhidaiivika*).

3. Cf. सदेव सोम्येदमग्र आसीदेकमेवाद्वितीयम् ।

*Chāndogya-Upaniṣad* 6.2.1.

तत् सत्यमित्याचक्षते ।

*Taittirīya-Upaniṣad* 2.6.1.

Cf. also *Gūā* 17.23.

2. The Chinese concept of Tao comes nearest to this; the ancient Greek concept of Logos partially resembles it.

We have seen that the word *ṛtam* originally meant not only Truth but also Goodness, the universal moral order or law. By the end of the Vedic period this latter meaning was transferred to the word *dharma* (from the root *dhṛ* meaning 'to bear, support, sustain'). With the development of theism and the law of Karma, *dharma* became the principle of divine justice meted out to people in accordance with their actions. The word *satya* came to stand for personal truthfulness, especially in speech. Thus the original integral concept of Reality as *ṛtam* came to be replaced by a divided view, and this was reflected in the disharmony in individual life and social organization.

### *Yajña*

It is the fall from the universal divine harmony that is the cause of all human conflict, evil and suffering. In order to overcome these man must return to *ṛtam*, according to the Vedic seers, or to the transcendent Brahman, according to the Upaniṣadic sages. How to do this? God is the primordial Teacher of mankind, and He teaches through the example of His own life. The Vedas hold that the creation of the universe is the result of the self-sacrifice of the Puruṣa, the Supreme Person. This is not one primeval act, but a timeless act. It is this ever-proceeding continual act of divine Self-sacrifice that maintains the harmony, *ṛtam* of the universe. So if man wants to attain harmony and peace, he too must imitate the Divine and convert his whole life into a sacrifice, *yajña*. It is through self-sacrifice that man recovers the harmony that he has lost, develops his potential divinity and attains supreme peace. This is a most fundamental concept in Vedānta. It is the very foundation of all Vedāntic forms of spiritual practice, and distinguishes Vedāntic meditation

(known as Upāsana) from yogic and other form of meditation.

Yajña is not mere 'sacrifice' which means the giving up of something which is dear to one somewhat reluctantly. Yajña is not a one-way traffic, a unilateral giving, giving, giving to God, without receiving anything in return. It is a two-way process of which giving is only one part, receiving being the other. We can give only what we receive, and without receiving anything what will we give? The English word 'sacrifice' stresses only the giving aspect, as the later Mīmāṃsaka (ritualist) philosophers too did.<sup>4</sup> The Vedic idea of Yajña may be described as 'participation' in the living drama of the cosmos. The essential point in participation is non-retention, not holding back. Life gives us food, air, energy, ideas, knowledge, love, rest, joy—life itself. It is an unceasing flow which can be maintained only by giving back to it what is taken out of it. This is what Yajña means, consciously maintaining this flow by not retaining what belongs to the universe. Life is a perpetually self-renewing cycle of energy and consciousness, an expression of *ṛtam*. The Gita calls it the *yajña-cakra*, the cosmic wheel of sacrifice. A person who holds back things without giving them to others, who lives only for himself, causes a break or obstruction in this cosmic cycle. About such a person the Gita says, 'He who follows not here the wheel thus set in motion is sinful, sensual and lives in vain'.<sup>5</sup>

There are two types of Yajña: divine and human. The sun is continuously giving away its energy by converting its hydrogen into

4. देवतोद्देशेन द्रव्यत्यागः ।

5. एवं प्रवर्तितं चक्रं नानुवर्तयतीह यः ।

अथायुरिन्द्रियारामो मोक्षं पार्थ स जीवति ॥

*Bhagavad-Gītā* 3.16.

helium at the rate of 600 million tons a second. What else is this process but a form of colossal solar self-sacrifice? The creation and maintenance of this whole universe, the constant rejuvenation of the earth through the rising and setting of the sun, the fall of rain, the flow of rivers, the blowing of wind, the growth of plants and animals, and all other countless, ever-recurring processes of creation, maintenance and destruction going on all over the universe—all these are manifestations of the cosmic Yajña of the Divine. That is why Śrī Kṛṣṇa says, 'The manifested Brahman (or Virāj) is established in Yajña.'<sup>6</sup> The food we eat, the water we drink, the air we breathe are all the sacramental products, the *yajña-śesam* or *prasāda* of the divine sacrifice. Even the natural physiological processes of the human body like breathing, digestion of food, production of energy in the cells through the citric-acid (Kreb's) cycle and oxidative phosphorylation, etc. are parts of the divine yajña. As the Lord declares in the Gita, 'I have nothing to gain in the three worlds, yet I continuously work. If I did not work unceasingly, these worlds would be destroyed.'<sup>7</sup>

What then is the individual Yajña? It is man's *conscious* participation in the divine Yajña. Any action becomes a *yajña* when it is done consciously and its fruit offered to the Cosmic Being. Self-awareness and selflessness are the two factors which convert mechanical secular activities into a spiritual discipline. Most actions of ordinary people lack these two factors, and that is why they lead to bondage and sorrow. This is stated in the

<sup>6</sup>. तस्मात् सर्वगतं ब्रह्म नित्यं यज्ञे प्रतिष्ठितम् ।

*Gītā* 3.15. Here the word *yajña* refers to divine Yajña, and not the pouring of oblation by priests, as the popular commentaries suggest, which makes very little sense.

<sup>7</sup>. *Bhagavad-Gītā* 3.22,23,

*Gita*: 'This world becomes a source of bondage only when work is done not as *yajña*.'<sup>8</sup> Almost all the miseries of life and the blunders we commit are caused by selfishness and our blind unconscious way of living and working. When work is done with selflessness and Self-awareness, it will not lead to bondage but will help to liberate the soul. This is not only the foundational principle of the Gita but an important spiritual law. Hindu Sādhana and spiritual life are based on this law.

Self-awareness is an important factor in spiritual life. In the first place, it prevents the soul from getting bound. Secondly, it connects individual *yajña* with the divine *yajña*. Thirdly, it has great transforming power. Even an ordinary action done with Self-awareness immediately starts producing great changes in a person's consciousness, whereas meditation and Japa done without it may not produce any noticeable change. Self-awareness converts every action into a *yajña*. In the *Śatapatha Brāhmaṇa* human life lasting for a hundred years is conceived as 36,000 fires, each fire standing for a day's work. 'To one who *knows* thus, even while he is asleep, all beings at all times build up these above-mentioned fires.'<sup>9</sup>

### *Dhī*

This takes us to the third principle enunciated in the Vedas, namely, the power of intuition known as *dhī*. This word does not mean the ordinary automatic thinking process, as many of the Western scholars have interpreted it. The Vedas themselves distinguish between ordinary mind (*manas*) and *dhī*. As the great Dutch scholar J. Gonda has established, *dhī* is intentional

<sup>8</sup>. यज्ञार्थात् कर्मणोऽन्यत्र लोकोऽयं कर्मबन्धनः ।

*Gītā* 3.9.

<sup>9</sup>. *Śatapatha-Brāhmaṇa* 10.4.1.12.

thought which becomes transcendental vision. It is the power of illumination hidden in the mind. The *Ṛg-Veda* describes it as having seven aspects (*sapta-śiṣṇīm*, 'seven-headed') and originating in *ṛtam*, the ultimate Truth-Harmony.<sup>10</sup> Since it springs from Truth, if we want to realize the ultimate Reality we must follow *dhī*. That is why in the ancient prayer of *Gāyatrī* the aspirant prays for the awakening of *dhī*. All thoughts do not lead to Truth. In fact, most of our daily thoughts lead us away from Truth, and some of them may lead us only to sorrow or destruction. Only that thought which originates in Truth can lead us to Truth. This superior transcendental thought is *dhī*. It is *dhī* that is the guiding power in meditation. Those who want to meditate should remember that meditation is not mere concentration on any thought. Rather, it is concentration through *dhī*, and until *dhī* is awakened true meditation is impossible. When *dhī* takes charge of the mind, meditation becomes spontaneous and will hit the mark.

*Dhī* is both spiritual intuition and will. In later Vedantic scriptures (under the influence of *Sāṃkhya* philosophy) it came to be replaced by the term *buddhi*. It should be remembered that mind and thought are not one and the same. Thought is a modification of the mind, no doubt, but this modification needs a special power. What is this power? The Vedic sages called it *vāk*, the Word (often wrongly translated as 'speech') which later on came to be called *śabda*. *Vāk* acting upon the mind produces thoughts. Behind every thought there is the power of *vāk*. But by indulging in uncontrolled, unconscious, aimless, useless, impure and harmful

thoughts the vast majority of people constantly fritter away this power. It is *dhī* that controls, conserves and guides the power of *vāk*.

How to awaken *dhī*? This is the most vital question in spiritual life. The easiest method of awakening *dhī* is through intense prayer. Prayer was very much neglected in later Hinduism, but in the early Vedic period it was the chief discipline of the *ṛsis*. The major portion of *Ṛg-Veda* consists of prayers of different types. Ordinary prayers are nothing but articulated lower desires prompted by the instincts of self-preservation and sense gratification. But spiritual prayer is the expression of the soul's longing for the ultimate Truth. It is an impulse issuing from the divine substratum of the soul and the universe. The famous *Nāsādiya-Sūkta* of the *Ṛg-Veda* describes the nature of Reality before creation as different from the manifested and the unmanifested, like darkness hidden in darkness 'In that, in the beginning, arose *kāma* (desire), the primordial seed of the mind.'<sup>11</sup> The *Upaniṣads* state that before creation the Supreme Spirit remained alone without a second. Then He desired, 'Let me be many; let me be born.'<sup>12</sup> Human prayer is only an echo or reflex of that primordial divine desire. God's desire was to become many, the object of human prayer is to become one with God.

### *Meditation and sacrifice*

The multiplicity that God desired was not chaos but cosmos (from the Greek

10. इमां धियं सप्तशीर्ष्णीं पिता न

ऋतप्रजातां बृहतीमविन्दत् ।

*Ṛg-Veda* 10.67.1

11. कामस्तदग्रे समवर्तताधि

मनसो रेतः प्रथमं यदासीत् ।

*Ṛg-Veda* 10.129.4

12. सोऽकामयत् बहु स्यां प्रजायेयेति ।

*Taittirīya-Upaniṣad* 2.6.1; also Cf. *Chāndogya-Upaniṣad* 6.2.2,3.



*kosmos* meaning 'order'), *rtam*. How was this divine desire fulfilled? How did the eternal Cosmic Order come into being? Through *tapas*, declare the Vedas. Coming from the root *tap*= 'to burn or heat', the word *tapas* means any concentrated effort involving self-denial. The popular meaning of *tapas* is austerity, and austerity means self-denial, some form of sacrifice. In the Upaniṣads it often stands for concentration, meditation: 'One-pointedness of mind and senses is indeed the highest *tapas*.'<sup>13</sup> Divine *tapas* is both a sacrifice and a meditation. It is, as the *Puruṣa-Sūkta* states, God's self-sacrifice, *ātma-yajña*. Hence God is identified with sacrifice: 'Sacrifice is indeed Viṣṇu.'<sup>14</sup> Again, God's *tapas* is of the nature of knowledge,<sup>15</sup> a pure meditation. Hence God is identified with meditation.<sup>16</sup> As a matter of fact, for God sacrifice and meditation are not two different acts but two aspects of one single act. His sacrifice is purely an exercise of His omnipotent will through His cosmic meditation.

Conscious thought and conscious action are only two expressions of one single intentional experience. Therefore during the early Vedic period the sages treated *yajña* and *upāsana*, sacrifice and meditation, as two aspects of one single discipline or *tapas*. This integrated *tapas* was the yoga of the Vedic seers. The physical ritual was only an externalization of the experience of unity with the cosmos attained through

meditation. It was physical *tapas*. On the other hand, meditation was an internalization of the spirit of sacrifice worked out in the outside world. Intentional thought has great power, and the Vedic seers knew it. They treated *yajña* only as a vehicle for the transmission of the power of intention to the external world. Every rite was a meditated act, inspired and directed by the *dhī*.

In fine, to the Vedic seers *yajña* was external meditation, while *upāsana* was internal *yajña*. Both had the same goal, namely, participation in *rtam*, Reality conceived as universal harmony. God, meditation and sacrifice constituted the triangle of Vedic life. They formed the basic equation of Vedic experience expressed in the statement: 'Thought is Prajāpati and Prajāpati is the sacrifice.'<sup>17</sup> The life of the Vedic Ṛṣi was not a struggle to realize an unknown transcendental Reality, but a direct participation in it. There was no division in it between the sacred and the secular, between the individual and the cosmic.

Gradually, as the concept of Reality changed from *rtam* to Brahman, the triangle of Vedic life broke up. And the equation based on it came to be replaced by the new equation of 'This Atman is Brahman', which shifted the focus of spiritual endeavour from integral life to inner consciousness. The division between inner life and outer life became stronger. In the meantime, in the hands of ignorant people *yajña* was becoming an independent institution in itself and, becoming more complex and magical, lost its spiritual meaning and purpose. It was being realized that the external act, like all other acts, perished as soon as it was performed, but the mental structure (*saṁsthā*) and connection (*nidāna*), that is, its conformity to the universal order

13. मनसश्चेन्द्रियाणां च ह्यैकाग्र्यं परमं तपः ।

*Mahābhārata*, Śā. 250.4, quoted by Śaṅkara on *Taittirīya-Upaniṣad* 3.2.1.

14. यज्ञो वै विष्णुः ।

*Taittirīya-Saṁhitā* 1.7.4

15. यस्य ज्ञानमयं तपः ।

*Mundaka-Upaniṣad* 1.1.8.9.

16. तपो ब्रह्मेति ।

*Taittirīya-Upaniṣad* 3.2.1.

17. *Kauṣītaki-Brāhmaṇa* 10.1.

did not perish. This made meditation more real than the external rituals. Soon it was found that thought was so powerful that it could bring about all the effects of rituals without performing them. As a

result, *upāsana* or meditation got separated from *yajña* or sacrifice, and became an independent spiritual discipline.

(To be continued)

## WILL-POWER AND ITS DEVELOPMENT—I

SWAMI BUDHANANDA

### *Twofold ideal of life*

Indian religious tradition teaches that human beings, generally speaking, can have two commendable aspirations. One is called *abhyudaya* or worldly prosperity and well-being; the other is called *nirśreyasa* or spiritual illumination and freedom. Of these both *dharma* or righteousness is said to be the basis. Prosperity that has not *dharma* as the basis crumbles down sooner than feared due to internal haemorrhage, so to say. Of course, spiritual illumination one cannot even think of except through being righteous.

Further it is taught, that if *abhyudaya* or worldly prosperity is not directed and subordinated to, and utilized for, attaining *nirśreyasa*, spiritual illumination, it becomes self-destructive. We must however, clearly understand that from prosperity illumination is not a logical development, though 'empty stomach is no good for religion'.

### *Will-power: the secret of success*

Now, this one thing we all definitely want in life: success. Whatever may be our undertakings—in the direction of worldly prosperity or spiritual illumination, in spheres secular or spiritual—not one of us likes to fail. We all want to succeed. Success though we all desire, it will be

noticed in various spheres of life, truly successful men are only a handful. Many are those who attain only a moderate degree of success. And many more just fail.

There will be various factors in the stories of men's successes and failures of life. But in every single case there will be one common factor involved. That is the factor of will-power. The degree of a person's success in life is commensurate with the degree of will-power he has attained.

'How to develop the will-power' thus turns out to be the most important fundamental issue of everyone's life. It should be the part of our education from our childhood to be trained in developing the will-power, for without it education remains largely ineffective. Swami Vivekananda says:

What is education? Is it book-learning? No. Is it diverse knowledge? Not even that. The training by which the current and expression of will are brought under control and become fruitful is called education. Now consider, is that education as a result of which the will, being continuously choked by force through generations, is now well-nigh killed out; is that education under whose sway even the old ideas, let alone new ones, are disappearing one by one; is that education which is slowly making man a machine?<sup>1</sup>

1. *The complete Works of Swami Vivekananda* (Calcutta. Advaita Ashrama, 1966) vol. 4, p. 490.

If, unfortunately, we have not learnt how to develop will-power early in life, we should do so at any stage of life, because self-improvement is almost impossible without the voluntary or involuntary exercise of the will-power. Whereas, given the will-power, we can bring about considerable changes in our individual and also collective lives for the better, from very hopeless situations.

Consider these three cases of modern history. When Lincoln was alone with history in the White House in those dark days of Civil War, what would have happened to the Union but for his powerful will to save it? Consider how the will-power of Winston Churchill played the decisive role in the 2nd World War. What would have happened to England and Europe now enjoying prosperity but for that man's will who said he had nothing else to offer but blood, sweat and tears? Consider again the effect of the will-power of Gandhiji, whom Churchill called 'the half-naked father', for all the peoples in the world who in their own lands were ruled by colonial powers?

If we study the lives of those persons who were once in very bad shape and afterwards were found to rise from the shambles in a spectacular manner, we shall discover, in every single case, it was their will-power that brought about their transformation and rise. If we study the lives of some persons who early in life showed much promise, had enviable facility to rise high, and yet never fulfilled their promise, wilting away like buds before fully blossoming, we shall discover in every single case that there it was the absence of the will-power that caused their early wilting.

Given the will-power, man makes everything out of nothing as it were. In the absence of the will-power, all his talents and qualities and endowments come to nothing.

### *How the will originates*

In the Vedas it is said:

This universe, in truth, in the beginning was nothing at all. There was no heaven, no earth, no atmosphere. This being, that was solely non-being, conceived a wish: 'May I be.'<sup>2</sup>

Whether you accept or reject the content of this cosmogony, one truth comes out of it: that behind all creative efforts in all spheres of life is an act of will. But what is will? Wherefrom does it originate? 'Will is a compound of the self and mind,'<sup>3</sup> says Swami Vivekananda.

By the word 'self' is meant here the Atman or the real soul of man. Atman is beyond causation. It is undifferentiated consciousness. In that consciousness there is no will, because will presupposes reaction to something external or other. In undifferentiated consciousness there is no such thing.

Though Atman is free in its pure essential nature, when identified with mind and body, it is in a state of bondage. In other words, in that state Atman is not free. The will is the first manifestation of the real self caught in phenomena or maya. It is a compound of Atman and mind, and mind is subtle matter. Therefore in the will there are two strands: one of the spirit, the other of matter, a strand of light and a strand of darkness.

In the ultimate analysis, however, this compound is bound to be unreal, for it is based on the unreality of maya. But as long as we are in the realm of maya, that is to say, as long as we remain spiritually unilluminated it is very real for all practical purposes. And it moves things in the way which nothing else does in the

<sup>2</sup> *Taittiriya Brāhmaṇa*, 2.2.9.1.

<sup>3</sup> *Complete Works* (1972) vol. 6, p. 44.

world, except the powerful forces of nature.

Even these great forces are surmounted by the force of human will. Imagine what was the face of America in the days of Columbus, or even what the Pilgrim Fathers saw, and compare it with the face of America today. These vast and stupendous changes were all brought about by human will. All the actions we see in the world, all the movements and achievements of man are manifestations of the will of man. What we are proud of, and what we deplore in human civilization; what amazes us in the spheres of science, and what makes us speechless in the domain of religion, are all manifestations of the will of man. As Swami Vivekananda says, 'This will is caused by character and character is manufactured by Karma or work. As is the Karma so is the manifestation of the will.'<sup>4</sup>

#### *The cause of small and big tragedies of life*

Let us now understand this concept of will-power from a practical point of view as it affects our life. Why at all need we develop the will-power when we may not be ambitious people trying to do spectacular things? Sometimes in our lives, may be in every one's life, great tragedies happen. They shake us to our roots. After that tragedy we are never the same persons again. If we know how to take these tragedies creatively, we are largely transformed. If not, we are crushed. These tragedies are such that we are forced to take agonizing notice of them. Not only that, others also take notice of them, for very often we become objects of real pity. This is about the big tragedies of our personal lives.

There is another kind of tragedy which is daily happening in every life, the con-

sequences of which are far-reaching. And in these small tragedies are rooted the great tragedies of life. But, somehow, most people seem not to notice them at all. These days, we are giving away our thinking power to machines in the hope of getting more out of life. But it would appear, by and large, we are gradually losing grip on life. It may not be an axiomatic truth, but we shall find it to be generally true that the more our homes become filled with gadgets, the less are the thoughtful people around.

The one way of keeping grip on life is right thinking and deep thinking. These days we all admire free-thinking. Free-thinking is good. But right thinking is better. When right thinking becomes deep thinking, it is excellent. Without cultivating the habit of introspection, it is impossible to keep track of all the forces that are operative within us. Without knowing the nature of these forces, we cannot be their masters. We are then bound to be their slaves. And what chances have slaves to develop and exercise their will-power, when that slavery is due to their own unregenerate nature? How can such persons ever build up their character? How can a man without a character have will-power?

Introspection will reveal that there is a basic tragedy involved in our daily life, in which most of our big tragedies are rooted. In Sanskrit this basic tragedy is narrated this way: 'I know what is *dharma*, what is righteousness, what is good, but I have not the inclination to do it. I know what is unrighteousness, *adharma*, what is evil, sin, but I cannot desist from doing it.'<sup>5</sup> A song of the mystic Rāmprasād, which Sri

5. ज्ञानामि धर्मं न च मे प्रवृत्तिः ।

ज्ञानाम्यधर्मं न च मे निवृत्तिः ॥

*Prapanna-Gītā* (or *Pāṇḍava-Gītā*)

4. *Complete Works* (1972) vol. 1, p. 30.

Ramakrishna used to sing piteously describes the content of this tragedy:

O Mother, I have none else to blame;  
 Alas! I sink in the well these very hands  
 have dug,  
 With the six passions for my spade,  
 I dug a pit in the sacred land of earth;  
 And now the dark water of death gushes forth!  
 How can I save myself, O my Redeemer?  
 Surely I have been my own enemy;  
 How can I now ward off this dark water of  
 death?  
 Behold, the waters rise to my chest!  
 How can I save myself? O Mother, save me!  
 Thou art my only Refuge; with Thy protect-  
 ing glance,  
 Take me across to the other shore of the world <sup>6</sup>

In its fullness the basic tragedy of our daily life leads to such spiritual crisis, about which Rāmprasād laments before the Divine Mother.

So then, the basic tragedy of our life is: (a) our inability to do the thing we know to be right and helpful; as well as, (b) our incapacity to desist from doing what we know to be wrong, unhelpful, if not disastrous.

We know it is good to use polite, decent and restrained language, in our daily dealings at home, on the street, in business, in politics, in society. But, in spite of ourselves, we use wrong language, from which arise many dissensions, small and big, at home, in society, in national and international affairs. Very often we do not remember the power of words, their capacity to break or make, wound or heal. More often, our will just fails to carry into practice what we know about the power of words. Through use of wrong language we are apt to make such wounds in others' hearts as will not be easily healed; or we may anger people to such an extent that

dire consequences may follow. And we ourselves shall have to reap them, however bitter they may be.

We know that it is beneficial to live a moral life, yet, in spite of ourselves, we commit sinful acts. And having committed them we have to take their painful consequences. We can give away our entire property but there is no way of giving away the fruits of our karmā. We shall have to enjoy or suffer them ourselves. We know it is good to live according to the commandments of religion and obey the precepts of the Guru. We know it is good to get up early in the morning and practise spiritual disciplines. But when in the morning the alarm clock dutifully rings, we feel annoyed and silence it as though it had committed some crime, and then pull the blanket over the nose and sleep half an hour more, only to hurry and worry all day long. In the evening when we return home we are a mass of tension, and so highly inflammable that any little thing is apt to set things on fire.

We may observe, even in little things how little of what we know to be good for us, to be beneficial for us, we are able to put into practice. On the contrary, we continue to do harmful things. We know it is not good to neglect our studies, but somehow we cannot turn our ears or eyes from the radio or TV, specially when a cricket match, a circus show, a fashion show or a movie is going on. If our mind timidly protests, we just give it a thrashing: how can I miss such an exciting thing, for the boring bla-bla-bla of my classes? And the consequences of it are too obvious in the ever growing restlessness and dissatisfaction among the youngsters.

Do not people very well know that it is not good to drink alcohol? Still they gulp one or two glasses first occasionally, then more, compulsively. They promise not to drink only to break the promise

6. Translation of Rāmprasād's song quoted from 'M' *The Gospel of Sri Ramakrishna* (Madras: Sri Ramakrishna Math, 1981) p. 203.

again. Ultimately they even fail to promise. I believe it was Will Rogers who said: 'Well, it is quite easy to give up smoking. I have done it a hundred times!' But the record of Alcoholic Anonymous shows it is possible to start a new life as it were, by developing a new will to live a different kind of life.

We know that over-weight is a health hazard, and we should avoid eating too many sweets and other highly fattening things. But when these things come round, we smile away our own mental decisions and opposition of well-wishers.

It is well-known that some of us can resist everything except temptations! There is a great fascination in the prohibited, great attraction in the destructive, great pull in the bizarre and wicked things in this world of maya. They pull us by the ear and make slaves of us. We do things in a hurry and then repent at leisure and weep in the darkness of our own making.

Now, why do we behave this way knowingly? We do wrong things unknowingly too. But, that apart, why do we do wrong things and fail to do right things, knowingly? We must not commit the mistake of thinking that we do such things because we are essentially wicked or because of some kind of 'original sin' in us or because of our being forced by evil powers. Let us know it for certain that no one in this world is essentially wicked. Essentially everyone is divine, because the essence of every being is Atman, which is divine. The apparent wickedness of any person is only a fortuity, an outer mask, and hence it can be gotten rid of. No cow tells a lie. A tree does not steal or rob. A stone slab does not commit burglary. Only man does all these. But a cow, as far as we know, cannot think of God. A tree cannot practise spiritual disciplines. A stone slab cannot realize God. But man can.

The inescapable conclusion, then, is that the basic daily tragedies of our lives are not rooted in any inalienable, essential wickedness in us, but in the failure of our will. Many of us have no idea how much of goodness, strength and greatness cry within us for self-manifestation. We have mostly known only the weaker side of ourselves, which in fact belongs to the not-Self, according to Vedanta. It is the basic tragedy of our daily life that effectively prevents a real encounter with our true self. Therefore it is important for every person to know how to avoid the failure of will. The only way to do it is to cultivate the will-power.

#### *How to generate will-power in the human system*

How do we cultivate the will-power?

(a) First let us understand what exactly is will-power, in working terms. It is that positive and creative function of the mind which impels, propels and enables us to do chosen actions in a definitive way, and avoid doing unchosen actions in an equally definitive way. It is that power of the mind which enables us to do what we know to be right, and not do what we know to be wrong, under all circumstances favourable or unfavourable, known or unknown.

(b) Secondly, it is important to know and believe that will-power can be increased by everybody, without any exception, provided we are ready to apply ourselves to it and work for it steadily and methodically. Our past failures have not necessarily to be our future failures also. No one is destined to be weak all his life except him who chooses to be so. A departure for the better, nobler, higher state of existence—at least a determined effort for it—is possible at one's chosen time. It is never too early or too late to be good, true, pure and strong. Swami

Vivekananda says: 'Stand up, be bold, be strong! Know that you are the creator of your own destiny. All the strength and succour you want is within yourself.'<sup>7</sup> What a life-giving, saving message! All the strength and succour we need is within ourselves. We should get a firm hold, an unshakable faith, in this fundamental truth.

(c) Only when we have a firm hold on this truth we can develop a will for developing the will-power. Though it may sound like a truism, it is very important to have a firm will to develop the will-power. Incredible though it may appear, many of us do not have even the will to develop the will-power! We seem to think it is big botheration, too exacting a responsibility to be carrying about all the time. But when we know for certain that within ourselves is unlimited power, that we are not these puny things as we appear to be, that we are not weak reeds worthy only to be broken anytime—then we develop the mind to manifest that power in our life, by sharply cutting out all delusions and illusions to which are the contrary.

(d) When this mind is developed, we are ready to take the most important step in developing the will-power. This step is to remove the dichotomy between the head and heart, the intellect and emotion, the thinking and feeling. How do we do it? It can be done only by loving the truth of our being. If we know it for certain that we are divine, we are the children of immortality, with a great history behind and a great destiny before, we will hate to do things which are unworthy of us, being determined to do things expected of us. In other words, our thoughts and emotions will unite in order to enable us to do the best expected of us by ourselves.

Maybe we shall not succeed without a struggle. What of that? What is the worth of a success achieved without a struggle? We shall most certainly succeed, if we give the fight all right, without allowing hypothetical fears to sabotage our self-confidence and energy-supply.

This is the best way of fighting evil within ourselves: assert the divine and the devil will run out. How do we assert the divine within us? If we want to assert the Divine, we must not do two things: we must not be cowards and we must not be hypocrites. We must be brave, take courage in both hands and follow the truth to its logical conclusion. Go with truth wherever it takes us: this should be our motto.

Opposition to this way of thinking and living will most certainly come. We must predetermine our proper attitude to such opposition and receive opposition without being overly ruffled, in good humour, with a smile, if possible. Swami Vivekananda indicates what should be our temper and attitude to oppositions. He asks:

Have you got the will to surmount the mountain-high obstructions? If the whole world stands against you sword in hand, would you still dare to do what you think is right? If your wives and children are against you, if all your money goes, your name dies, your wealth vanishes, would you still stick to it? Would you still pursue it and go steadily towards the goal?<sup>8</sup>

It is in this temper that we shall have to face opposition. You may raise the objection: to begin with, I do not have the will to surmount mountain-high obstruction. That is my problem! That is *not* your problem. Your problem is you have not adequate love for truth. Intensify the love of truth, then this temper for facing the opposition will spontaneously grow in you.

(e) Two things will oppose this cre-

<sup>7</sup>. *Complete Works* (1971) vol 2, p 225.

<sup>8</sup>. *Complete Works* (1960) vol. 3, p. 226.

ative move within us: (1) our regrets about the past, and (2) our worry about the future. Both of these are detrimental to the cultivation of will-power, because they successfully undercut all forward-looking, creative, positive movements within our minds. They are also wholly unnecessary performances. Exaggerated regrets for our past and over much worry about our future, will only damage our present, weaken our minds and injure our future also.

Now you may honestly say: how can I but regret for my past? In the past I committed many sins. Is it not my religious duty to repent for my past sins? This is an important question which requires a thorough clearing and scotching. Sloppy Vedantins are apt to make light of sin in the vain hope that their reported divinity will somehow like a sponge suck out all their bad karma, and whisk them aloft to the empyreans of *moksa* by a trick that is not to be explained though they continue to live indifferent lives. Vedanta acknowledges the fact of sin, but completely rejects the theory of original sin as wholly irrational. Man has nothing but original divinity and adventitious sin. Adventitious though, sin has a powerful binding effect on the soul and its free expression.

Therefore, the fact of sin has to be acknowledged as any other empirical fact. It is one thing to acknowledge the fact of sin, but it is a totally different thing to become some sort of a sin-monger, a habitual regretter. Whatever pious a face this regretting-ad-infinitum may put up, psychologically it is an unsound approach if you intend to get rid of it. If you are over much regretting for any sin, it is likely that you are mentally enjoying repeating the sin under the cover of righteousness.

The most important thing to be done about sin is to stop sinning, physically or mentally. How do we do it? There are

a few teachings of Sri Ramakrishna which when practised will completely take care of such inner situations in the life of an earnest spiritual seeker:

Bondage is of the mind, and freedom also is of the mind. A man is free if he constantly thinks: 'I am a free soul. How can I be bound, whether I live in the world or forest? I am a child of God, the king of kings, who can bind me?' If bitten by a snake, a man may get rid of its venom by saying emphatically, 'There is no poison in me.' In the same way, by repeating with grit and determination, 'I am not bound, I am free,' one really becomes so, one really becomes free.

The wretch who constantly says, 'I am bound, I am bound' only succeeds in being bound. He who says day and night 'I am a sinner, I am a sinner,' verily becomes a sinner.

One should have such burning faith in God that one can say. 'What, I have repeated the name of God, and can sin cling to me? How can I be in bondage any more?'

If a man repeats the name of God, his body, mind and everything become pure. Why should one talk only about sin and hell, and such things? Say but once, 'O Lord, I have undoubtedly done wicked things but I won't repeat them.' And have faith in His name.<sup>9</sup>

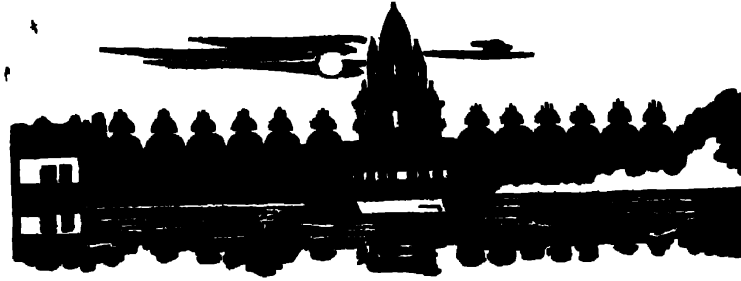
This is precisely what we have to do in regard to our past sins: 'Say but once' in true contrition to God of your heart: this really I have done. Pardon me. I shall not do so again. Then resolve to keep the word given to God. And repeat the name of God. Repetition of Lord's name will give us the power to keep our resolution.

It is, however, more important that we live a wakeful life in the living present with an unencumbered free mind honestly trying to live according to our highest convictions. He who suffocates this moment with the worries of moments that are yet not, is doing everything possible to make

(Continued on page 222)

9. *The Gospel* (1942) p. 138.





## BUDDHA'S TRUTH

ROBERT P. UTTER

### *Ego—the obstacle to Truth*

The Buddha said, 'All life is suffering,' and he was right, as a little thought reveals. I have heard the interpretation of this statement of the Buddha that it is no more true than the view of a child who, when he cries from some childish grief, feels the whole world to be terribly sad. However, the difference between such a transference of subjective emotion to the external world and the philosophical view of the Buddha can be seen in a moment if we but consider the fact that the Buddha was never himself sad. He was not transferring an emotion from himself to the world; he was, rather, observing the world from a dispassionate, unemotional point of view, the point of view of an illumined sage who has experienced *nirvāṇa*. He was always calm and serene, being filled with the peace that 'passeth understanding'. Yet he said that the whole world of *samsāra*, the relative world, the world of sense experience, mental experience, and the desires of the ego, is not the joy that everyone takes it to be but is really nothing but suffering. How could a man of joy and peace say that life is suffering? Because only a man established in non-worldly joy and its peace could continue to see unwaveringly that ordinary worldly joys are by contrast unstable and changeable and therefore without value.

Just consider the mind of an ordinary man who might make a similar statement. An ordinary (non-illumined) man who says that the world is nothing but suffering would himself be suffering from great bitterness. But that bitterness would be instantly turned to joy if the cause were removed. Since the cause of bitterness is always unfulfilled desires, the man would cease to be bitter if his desires were satisfied, and he would accordingly cease to see the world as a place of suffering. The ordinary man thus always alternates between joy and suffering, between praising life for its beauty and condemning it for its ugliness, depending on whether his desires are satisfied or not. The Buddha, on the other hand, was beyond desires, beyond relative joys and sorrows, and therefore he was able to experience a joy of an entirely different kind: absolute joy and peace. He was beyond the pairs of opposites, and thus his joy was not the peak of a wave which would be inevitably followed by its trough, but was unalterable, indestructible, unborn, undying, eternal, and infinite. The Buddha was thus not motivated by any bitterness or resentment, which always comes as reaction to a disappointment, a failure to achieve a desire. He was, rather, motivated solely by compassion for all beings, a compassion which was born of a complete understanding of all beings through the extinction of personal, ego-centred

desires. He was not, therefore, describing a personal, psychological state of suffering ; he was dispassionately observing an eternal truth about the suffering of all mankind. Thus we can see that the suffering of most men's lives must be the result of the fact that they are driven by their desires, and that this is what the Buddha is talking about.

Now what is the truth about human life, the truth whether we like it or not, the truth that we must face when we get down to what really takes place, instead of the rosy picture we are forever substituting for the truth? The truth is that there is an obstacle in our way whenever we try to get at the truth, an obstacle which is very hard to remove. It is because of the difficulty in removing this obstacle that we persist in our romantic views of human life and never really see or admit to ourselves the truth of the Buddha's statement that all human life is suffering. This obstacle is the ego, and this ego we cling to through all the vicissitudes of life and death, giving up body after body, but never giving up the ego. It is the desire for the ego that makes us cling to all finite desires, for the ego is the source of our desires. It is the total conviction that we are the finite ego that makes us desire finite objects. Our love for the ego is thus the central heart of all our desires from which spreads out a vast network of arteries and nerves reaching in every direction, a network which creates and encompasses and sustains our whole relative world (the banyan-tree symbol of the *Bhagavad-Gītā*). The ego is our root desire, and thus we may call it our desire to desire, the universal basis of all our particular desires. It is this root desire that keeps us from admitting that desires have anything wrong in them ; so we keep on creating desires indefinitely because of this basic desire to desire.

The ego is thus the source of all our

troubles, because it is the nucleus and symbol of our basic false belief about the self. It is the finite mask we have superimposed upon the infinite Self which each one of us in reality is. Believing ourselves to be finite, we then must always desire something more than we have and are, because we are in reality the infinite, not the finite at all, and nothing less than the infinite can satisfy us. Therefore, strange as it may seem, desires are not wrong from the point of view of the ego, because the ego is finite, and the finite must always desire something more. But if we desire only the finite, we must keep seeking new finite forms to satisfy our desires. Our real desire, however, is to realize our true infinite nature underneath the mask of the finite which we have superimposed upon ourselves. Therefore, our true desire can never be satisfied by means of the finite ; yet we must, as long as we identify ourselves with the finite ego, keep seeking new finite things to enlarge the finite self we believe ourselves to be. Since we cannot reach the infinite by adding finite to finite, we are doomed to disappointment.

It is this endless round of disappointments that the Buddha is referring to when he says that all life is suffering. We, the infinite, desire only the finite. That is our sorrow. That is the source of the suffering we go through every moment of our lives, and every moment of our deaths. For we have, each one of us, lived and died in the body many times before this life. Buddhism and Hinduism agree on this point. Each one of us has an indeterminably long past of many hundreds or thousands or millions of lives before the present one. Yet we could put an end to it all very quickly, not by suicide, but by killing our attachment to the ego. Then we would no longer desire the finite, but the infinite only. Could we but desire only the infinite, we would recollect our true nature as infinite in short

order and so put an end to the suffering inherent in all finite lives.

### *Desire, fear, hope*

We now have before us the cosmic view of each one of us. For millions of lives we have desired only the finite by clinging to the mistaken notion that we are the ego ; yet in reality we hunger only for the infinite. All the teachings of the East have been to this effect, and the West is coming to this view more and more out of a general disillusionment with material values. With this universal truth clearly before us, let us take a long, hard look at human life as it is, without our romantic glasses on.

It is not the fact that we desire that is wrong, but that, believing ourselves to be finite, we desire only finite things. As long as we believe ourselves to be finite we must desire something, but that something must be the infinite, for that is our true nature and therefore our only source of satisfaction. I could be ruler of the universe, but as long as that was *all* I conceived myself to be, I would suffer from desire, fear, and hope, because the ruler of the finite, even of the universe, is still only finite, for the universe, though subject to him, is still an 'other' and as such limits him.

It is this trio: desire, fear, and hope, that are the source of all misery. The three are really one, three names for the same thing. As long as I believe myself to be finite, I must desire more. As long as I believe myself to be finite, I must fear all other beings because they threaten me. And as long as I believe myself to be finite, I hope for a satisfaction I have not yet found. So I go from moment to moment in the perpetual hope of finding what I am seeking, but never do I actually find it. Because of desire, fear, and hope I go from birth to death again and again until I cease

to desire the finite and desire only the infinite.

We may refuse to admit the truth of this analysis, but such a refusal is based on a fear of finding all desires and their fulfilment or non-fulfilment as hollow as a stalk of dead bamboo. Once that is found, then all relative life becomes meaningless and trivial and not worth seeking, and this we cannot endure. (The flute of Kṛṣṇa is a hollow reed. Is this why the cry of the flute of Kṛṣṇa is such an unendurable joy and unendurable agony at the same time? Is this why the flute of Kṛṣṇa is ever the wind-hollow, distant call of God to drop everything, whatever we are doing, and come, now?)

Thus we can see that everyone except the illumined sage lives in this intermixture of desire, fear, and hope. Desire, fear, and hope: all of these are bad, but the worst of these is hope. Consider for a moment just what it is that hope does: it leads us on, it keeps us going through the ever-recurring round of birth and death, instead of letting us drop out of the rat-race and find peace, find our true being and our true joy. Thus it is hope that prevents us from renouncing the world and makes us hold on to our desires and our misery, for hope makes us believe that the satisfaction of our desires is just around the corner. It is the expectation of the fulfilment of the personal, ego-centred, finite desires that lures everyone onward, like a mirage in the desert, from minute to minute, day to day, life to life. Finite things can no more fulfil our desires than a mirage of a lake can slake our thirst. Hope is the expectation of future happiness from the fulfilment of finite desires. This kind of happiness can never be a present one because it exists only in anticipation. We are never happy in the present moment, only in anticipation. (Memories do not bring happiness because they always involve the

sense of the loss of times past, which gives us pain.) If we are hungry we look forward to a meal, but as soon as we eat we look forward to something else for we are satiated and the food no longer interests us. It may temporarily satisfy our physical hunger, but us it cannot satisfy for our hunger is much deeper than for physical food. A rich man is never really happy except in giving away his riches to the poor. Only the infinite can satisfy our hunger. So in seeking satisfaction in the finite we are driven on and on and never find any permanent joy or peace.

The hope we are speaking of, the hope we must renounce, is the hope of enjoying finite objects of desire, not the hope of eternal, uncaused, objectless joy. It is only by giving up particular joys that we can experience the infinite eternal joy that is non-dual, that is, without cause and without object. Eido Roshi, a Buddhist monk and teacher, gave Peter Mattheissen, author of the book *Snow Leopard*, the following advice when Mattheissen left New York to undertake the arduous journey to the Crystal Monastery in Nepal: 'Expect nothing.'<sup>1</sup> This can well be a *mantra* for every true spiritual aspirant of whatever creed or faith, for it expresses the eternal truth that God alone is. Only by expecting 'no thing' can we find God. The futility of this endless search for the satisfaction of finite desires must be at least somewhat apparent to us before we can be ready to undertake the real quest: the giving up of the finite and the seeking only for the infinite. We must become disillusioned with sense objects before we can turn away from them. We can accelerate this disillusionment by continual meditation on the fact that sense objects can never satisfy us.

If we stand on a street-corner and watch the passers-by, we can see the truth of this very clearly. Look at the expressions on their faces. Each person is continually reaching forward mentally, leaping to grasp something he does not have; there is a pathetic eagerness in each person's eyes, a desperate expectation of future fulfilment that never comes to pass; all are springing forward into the future as monkeys swing and leap from branch to branch; all are escaping from the unendurable past as from the jaws of a wild beast and their eyes are bright with the anticipation of the fulfilment of some purpose. Anticipation of a future moment is the essence of all relative existence for men and animals alike. Purposive action is based on the hope of future enjoyment of some finite object, and purposive action is what runs the whole relative universe. No matter what anyone is doing—whether walking, working, eating, or even resting or sleeping—all is nothing but a leaping forward or a preparation to leap into the next moment of change. Never is anyone settled immovably into the present moment, which alone is real, except the sage in meditation. The true sage is always in meditation, no matter what he appears to be doing; whether walking, talking, working, eating, resting, or meditating, he is always meditating. Meditation is the only true enjoyment of the present moment, for it is timeless enjoyment, the experience of the present moment as the Eternal Now. But most people never cease leaping like wind from wave-tip to wave-tip of life, never stopping to calm the raging waters of their restless minds. Most people are always in mid-leap between past and future, about to seize the moment, about to grasp the joy, but never really in possession of it. As a monkey does not hold long to one branch but leaps constantly from one branch to another in

1. Peter Mattheissen, *The Snow Leopard* (New York: Bantam Books, 1979) p. 135.

rapid succession, so does the sense-bound man leap from one finite purpose to another, satisfied with none.

Everyone is thus moved by the ever-eluding objects of desire like a puppet on a string, jerked hither and yon by the puppeteer, the ego. This feverish activity of everyone continues unabated from birth to death, and beyond. Death is merely the cutting of the strings of the puppet so that it falls limp and motionless. But, though the puppet's strings are cut and the puppet dangles lifeless, the puppeteer, the ego, is still there behind the scenes. He makes a new puppet, or picks another one, or puts new strings on the old one, and makes it dance just as before. So the frantic dance goes on, aeon after aeon. Desires never cease as long as the ego lives; they go on from body to body, like a bird returning to its old nest or building a new one in its old nesting place spring after spring.

### *The awakening*

This process drives blindly on life after life, until something awakens us to the futility of it. Some powerful guru, or combination of several gurus, awakens us. This is symbolized in the story of Buddha's life about the roles played in the awakening of the future Buddha by the sick man, the old man, the dead man, and the monk. These four conditions of man symbolize the sufferings of life which awaken each one of us to what life is really all about: sickness, old age, death, and renunciation leading to illumination, the guru power. Through these four basic facts of life we learn more than detachment from sickness, age, and death. We learn through detachment the deeper meanings about sickness, age, death, and renunciation, such as, that, whether the body is well or ill, life itself as we ordinarily live it is a perpetual

sickness;<sup>2</sup> that whether the body is young or old, the ego that goes from body to body is centuries old, having lived countless lives before, and yet is nothing but an illusion;<sup>3</sup> that whether the body is alive or dead, we are dead to truth when we seek nothing but the satisfactions of finite desires;<sup>4</sup> that renunciation of finite desires and all desire for finite desires is necessary if we are to find the peace and joy that give true satisfaction.<sup>5</sup>

This wonderful realization must come to everyone sooner or later. At first it brings total despair, for all appears lost with the perception that finite desires bring no true satisfaction. This total despair, which may result in actual physical sickness, is the necessary prelude to peace. In the end, peace comes, and a joy beyond all finite joys. It is a total revolution in our whole perception of our values, our world, our friends, and ourselves. Nothing is ever the same. As Sri Ramakrishna said, 'It is not a watersnake but a cobra that has bitten you.' Once we have been bitten by the cobra of truth nothing can ever again be the same for us. It may take a long time or it may take a short time for the venom to work, but sooner or later we shall be illumined. There may be little suffering or much suffering, but sooner or later we shall find peace. We shall find peace when we realize within our hearts the real meaning of Buddha's truth that all life is suffering.

The real meaning is more than just that life as it is lived is nothing but obvious suffering. From a worldly point of view

2. See Henry Clarke Warren, *Buddhism in Translation* (Cambridge, Massachusetts: Harvard University Press, 1922) p. 423

3. See Warren, pp. 129-152, 234-252, and Dwight Goddard, ed., *A Buddhist Bible* (Boston: Beacon Press, 1970) pp. 28-9

4. See Warren, pp. 255-262

5. Warren, pp. 331-351.

man has some moments of satisfaction of his desires, although not as many as he likes to believe. But we do not really understand what Buddha meant until we realize that even those apparent satisfactions are no satisfactions at all, because as soon as a desire is fulfilled another one takes its place. The very nature of desire for finite objects is that it can never be satisfied because finite things can never satisfy our real nature which is infinite. Joy is to be found only in the infinite, in the extinction of all desires for the finite, *nirvāṇa*. To persist in the delusion of the hope that we can be satisfied by finite things is the most foolish of notions. One must divest oneself of all hope, of all desire to find something better in the way of external conditions in the future if one is to find truth. This is not a mental state of 'hopelessness' in the popular sense, a deep depression and despair. Hopelessness in this popular sense of the word is simply the form that hope takes when it is completely frustrated. This ordinary state of despair is therefore not the solution, for it is still a kind of hope. Really to give up hope we must give up hopelessness as well, for we must give up all possibility of ever being disappointed in the way things turn out. To give up hope in the true sense we must give up desire, and if we give up desire we shall then feel no fear. Thus the real meaning of this truth is that we must give up all desire for desire, that is, we must give up the ego, for the ego is the source of desire.

That is why the Buddha emphasized so much the total unreality of the ego, and why he never would discuss the undiscussible question of the immortality of the soul. To realize the true meaning of the abstract concept called the 'immortality of the soul' one must actually go beyond all divisions of consciousness and realize in a concrete but universal spiritual

experience the total and absolute unity of true selfhood. Such absolute unity, being non-dual and all-inclusive, precludes the possibility of all argument, rational thinking, and discussion, for all of these mental activities are the essence of multiplicity and diversity. It is not that Buddha denies the immortality of the self; it is rather that there is no discussion of the subject that could help one to realize one's true infinitude and immortality. Therefore he gave no promise of immortality, only a certainty of the nothingness of all things mortal, including desires, sense objects, the mind and all mental objects, and anything we could possibly mean by the term 'self' or 'soul'. He offered no compromise between ideas, which, being many, are false, and truth, which, being non-dual, is totally beyond words and thoughts.

If we give up desires for finite things, including the ego, we shall cease to run after the finite, which cannot possibly satisfy us. Then we shall be able to settle into the true enjoyment of the present moment, which is all we ever have, and to see the present for what it truly is: the eternal and infinite Self which we are, and which fulfils all our desires right now and forever. Then all sorrows, which spring from seeking joy in some future finite moment, will cease, and in their place will dawn the light of the unchanging One-without-a-second. Then, instead of our desires being 'extinguished', as the word '*nirvāṇa*' implies, we shall find that our desires have shifted or expanded from the finite to the infinite, and we shall then know that desire for the infinite is the only desire that can ever be truly fulfilled, for it alone of all desires can be fulfilled in the present moment, which is in reality the Eternal Now.

This is what the Buddha meant when he said that all life is sorrow. Sri Ramakrishna said it in a more positive form.

which may appeal more effectively to our hedonistic and sceptical age which wants to 'have everything now'. Sri Ramakrishna said, 'Brahman and Shakti are one, just as fire and its burning power are one...just as a gem and its brightness are one.'<sup>6</sup> By this he meant that God is not essentially different from His creation, the world of finite sense objects which we see around us. But to see the world as one with God we must purify our hearts, that is, our egos, which are the source of all our difficulties. He said further.

On the mirror of the 'devotee's ego' you will see the Eternal Shakti, that is, the Brahman with attributes. But the mirror must be thoroughly cleansed. If there be dirt, you won't get the true reflection! So long as one has to see the sun in the water of 'ego', and there is no other way left to see the real sun except through the reflected sun, the reflection itself must remain the whole truth. If you want the knowledge of the Absolute, make use of this reflected sun and go towards the true sun. For He who is Brahman with attributes, is Brahman beyond the attributes, the same who is Shakti is Brahman

6. *Teachings of Sri Ramakrishna* (Calcutta: Advaita Ashrama, 1975) pp. 318-9

All distinction goes after the perfection of knowledge.<sup>7</sup>

The Upaniṣadic prayer says, 'Lead me from the unreal to the real', because the unreal is an appearance of the real and its only reality is the real. As the infinite sky is reflected in a finite pond when the waves are still, so the infinite Godhead can be reflected in the finite ego if it is desireless. We need not give up anything; we need only see the world without the distortion of the ego-centred desires. We can give up finite desires if we desire only the infinite, and this desire for the infinite leads to the vision of the infinite, and then all desires cease. Desireless vision is vision of truth, and the vision of truth is without grief and sorrow.

The Buddha did not teach a doctrine of sorrow; on the contrary, he taught infinite joy. What he taught was the extinction of sorrow by the extinction of the belief that the ego and its desires are real. When we no longer see them as real, we shall enjoy the infinite bliss of *Nirvāṇa*.

7. *Teachings*, pp. 320-1.

(Continued from page 215)

his future fearful. 'In the heart of this moment is eternity!' said Meister Eckhart. And if this moment we have lived well, done our best, we may very well leave the rest. For nothing better can ever be done for future than always doing our very best right now.

We may, however, always examine our doing best and trying to find methods of even bettering our best-doing. Worry for

the future is a mental disease, the medicine of which is to live entirely in this moment with all our powers poised and applied. Those who want to develop will-power must scrupulously avoid living in the past or future, and live in the living present. If we live in the present wisely according to our best light, our future cannot but be good whatever the astrologers may say.

(To be concluded)

## GOPALER-MA

SWAMI CHETANANANDA

*(Continued from the previous issue)*

Her visions and play with Gopāla continued for two months. During this time she was always in an ecstatic mood. She had to force herself to continue her daily routine of bathing, cooking, eating, Japa, and meditation. Gradually her divine intoxication subsided; yet she continued to have several visions of Gopāla a day. Since she had become convinced that Sri Ramakrishna and Gopāla were one and the same, she had fewer visions of the form of Gopāla and more of Sri Ramakrishna while meditating, with the voice of Gopāla instructing her through him. She went to Sri Ramakrishna one day and said to him, crying: 'Gopāla, what have you done to me? Did I do anything wrong? Why do I not see you in the form of Gopāla as before?'

Sri Ramakrishna consoled her, saying: 'In this Kali Yuga if one has such visions continuously, one's body will not last long. It will survive only twenty-one days and will then drop off like a dry leaf.' Since Gopaler-ma had experienced the bliss of constant divine inebriation, it was difficult for her to live without it. She had no interest in mundane things. Just as a worldly person is always restless for worldly objects, in the same way her heart was restless for the continuous vision of Gopāla. She felt a pain in her chest and thought it was due to the pressure of gas. But Sri Ramakrishna told her: 'It is not gas. It is caused by your spiritual energy. How will you pass your time if it goes away? Let it be with you. When you feel too much pain, please eat something.'

Sri Ramakrishna used to receive gifts of sweets, fruits and rockcandy from various people. There were some business people who would offer gifts to him believing that such offering to a holy man would bring them prosperity. This type of food invariably contaminates the mind of the eater. Consequently, Sri Ramakrishna would not give these things to his pure-hearted young disciples. The only devotees to whom he would give them were Swami Vivekananda and Gopaler-ma. He knew that the minds of these two great souls were in such a high realm that they could never be affected by eating any kind of food.

One day Gopaler-ma came to see the Master with some women devotees. Pointing to her, he said to those present: 'Ah, there is nothing inside this body but God. He fills it through and through.' Then the Master fed Gopaler-ma with various delicacies and gave her some food which he had received from several Calcutta business people. At this, Gopaler-ma said, 'Why are you so fond of feeding me?'

Sri Ramakrishna replied, 'You have also fed me with so many things in the past.'

'In the past? When?', she asked.

'In your previous life', he said.

During the Car Festival of Lord Jagannath in 1885, Sri Ramakrishna went to Balaram Bose's house in Calcutta. Balaram had invited many devotees for the celebration. While he was there the Master spoke highly of the God-intoxicated state



and visions of Gopaler-ma, and at his behest, Balaram sent a man to bring her. Just before her arrival the Master was talking to the devotees when suddenly he merged into ecstasy. His body assumed the pose of Gopāla, crawling on both knees, one hand resting on the ground, the other raised, and the face turned up as if he were expecting someone. Gopaler-ma arrived then and found Sri Ramakrishna in the posture of her Chosen Ideal. The devotees were amazed, seeing that divine sight.

'Truly speaking, I don't care for this stiff posture,' she said. 'My Gopāla should laugh and play, walk and run. But what is this? He has become stiff like a log. I don't like to see this sort of Gopāla!'

It was a striking feature in Sri Ramakrishna's life that whenever any mood came over him he would be fully identified with it. Even in his later years, when he sang, danced or made gestures like a woman or a child, people were amazed, seeing their precision and spontaneity. His voice was sweet and melodious, and his movements were natural, simple, and beautiful. There was not an iota of insincerity or display in his behaviour and action.

Sri Ramakrishna stayed in Calcutta for a few days, and then left for Dakshineswar by boat. Some of the devotees, including Gopaler-ma, accompanied him. Balaram's family had lovingly given Gopaler-ma some necessary items of clothing and utensils in a bundle which she was carrying on the boat. The Master came to know from other devotees what was in the bundle. Immediately he became grave, and without directly referring to the items, he began to speak about renunciation. He said: 'Only a man of renunciation realizes God. The devotee who is simply satisfied with another man's hospitality and returns empty-handed, sits very close to God.' He did not say a single word to her, but he

kept looking at her bundle. Gopaler-ma understood.

The Master always watched over his devotees so that they might not deviate from the path of non-attachment. He could be as soft as a flower, and again as strong as a thunderbolt. His superhuman love conquered the hearts of the devotees, so a little indifference from him would give them unbearable pain. Gopaler-ma was stung with remorse and thought of throwing the bundle away. But she kept it, and when she reached Dakshineswar she related everything to the Holy Mother. She was ready to give all the items away, but the Holy Mother stopped her and said: 'Let the Master say what he wants. There is no one to give you gifts, and moreover, you have been given some things which you need.' Nevertheless Gopaler-ma gave some of the things away. Then she cooked some curries for the Master and carried the tray of food to him. Seeing her repentance, he behaved with her in his usual manner. She returned to Kamarhati feeling much relieved.

After God-realization the illumined soul is carried along by the momentum of his past karma, but he ceases to be affected by it. He behaves like a witness, completely unattached to the world. He continues his daily routine and he helps other people toward realization. Gopaler-ma also followed her old routine. But from time to time she would visit the Master, and whatever visions she had during meditation she would relate to him. Once he said to her, 'One should not disclose one's visions to others, because it stops further visions.'

One day, however, Gopaler-ma and Swami Vivekananda, then called Narendranath, chanced to be present at Dakshineswar at the same time. Gopaler-ma was uneducated, unsophisticated, simple, and a devout worshipper of God with form. In striking contrast, Narendranath was learned,

sophisticated, intelligent, and a staunch believer in the formless God. As a member of the Brahmo Samaj, he looked down on worship of God with form. Sri Ramakrishna had a tremendous sense of humour, so he engaged these two devotees, with their opposing points of view, in a discussion by requesting Gopaler-ma to relate her visions to Narendranath.

'But will there not be harm in telling them?' she asked, for he had warned her not to divulge them. Assured by him that it would be all right, she related all her visions in detail to Narendranath with overwhelming joy and tears.

Devotion is contagious. Narendranath, in spite of his manly exterior and faith in rationalism, could not control his tears. His heart was filled with love and religious fervour. The old lady now and then interrupted her story to say: 'My son, you are learned and intelligent, and I am a poor, illiterate widow. I don't understand anything. Please tell me, are these visions true?'

'Yes, mother, whatever you have seen is all true,' Narendranath assured her.

On another day Gopaler-ma invited Sri Ramakrishna for lunch at Kamarhati. This time the Master went by boat with Rakhal, a young disciple who later became Swami Brahmananda. She received them cordially, and after they had enjoyed the delicacies she had cooked for them, they went to a room upstairs which had been arranged for their rest. Rakhal fell asleep immediately, but the Master was wide awake. Presently a foul odour permeated the room, and he saw two hideous looking ghosts with skeletal-like forms. They said to him humbly: 'Why are you here? Please go away from this place. Seeing you we are in unbearable pain.' The Divine Presence was no doubt the cause of their pain, either because it reminded them of

their own pitiable condition, or because evil spirits cannot bear that presence.

Sri Ramakrishna immediately arose and gathered up his small spice bag and towel. In the meantime Rakhal woke up and asked. 'Master, where are you going?' 'I shall tell you later,' said Sri Ramakrishna. They both went downstairs to Gopaler-ma and, saying good-bye to her, left in a boat. The Master then told the whole story to Rakhal, explaining that he did not say anything to Gopaler-ma because she was staying there alone. At any rate, she knew that ghosts frequented the area, and Sri Ramakrishna knew that her spirituality protected her from their presence.

'One who has steadfast devotion to truthfulness realizes the God of Truth,' said Sri Ramakrishna. His own life was based on truth, and whatever he said invariably came true. One day Gopaler-ma cooked for the Master at Dakshineswar. When he found that the rice was not properly boiled, he indignantly said: 'Can I eat this rice? I shall not take rice out of her hand anymore.' People thought that the Master had only warned her to be careful in the future. But shortly afterward it so happened that cancer developed in his throat, and from then on he could only eat thin porridge and liquids.

As the illness grew worse, Sri Ramakrishna was moved from Dakshineswar to Calcutta, and then to Cossipore (a northern suburb of Calcutta), for treatment. Gopaler-ma now and then would come to serve him. One day the Master expressed a desire to eat a special kind of thick milk pudding. Yogindra, a young disciple, was sent to Calcutta to buy the pudding from the market. On the way, however, he stopped at the house of Balaram Bose, and when the women devotees heard about his errand, they asked him to wait and let them cook it. They meant well, reasoning that the home-made food would be of a better

quality than the market food. Yogindra agreed. But when he returned with the pudding and told the Master the reason for his delay, the Master scolded him: 'I wanted to eat the market pudding, and you were told to buy it. Why did you go to the devotee's house and give them trouble over it? Besides, this pudding is very rich and hard to digest. I will not eat it.' Indeed, he did not touch it, but he asked the Holy Mother to give the pudding to Gopaler-ma. As he explained: 'This is given by the devotees. Gopāla dwells in her heart. Her eating it will be the same as my eating it.'

After the passing away of Sri Ramakrishna, Gopaler-ma was grief-stricken and for a long time lived in seclusion. After a while, however, repeated visions of the Master consoled her bereaved heart. Once she went to attend the Car Festival of Jagannath in Mahesh, on the other side of the Ganga. There she had the cosmic vision of the Lord. She saw her beloved Gopāla not only in the image of Jagannath in the chariot, but also in the pilgrims who were pulling the chariot. 'I was then not myself,' she said. 'I danced and laughed and created a commotion there.'

Occasionally she would visit Sri Ramakrishna's monastic disciples at the Baranagore monastery. At their request she would cook a couple of dishes and offer them to the Master.

The human mind is a mysterious phenomenon. In general, people are not happy because their minds are always craving worldly comforts and luxuries. The mind becomes impure when it is involved with mundane things, and it becomes pure when it becomes desireless. The impure mind suffers, and the pure mind enjoys bliss. It is very difficult to give the mind to God if it is preoccupied with many worldly possessions. Gopaler-ma's mind, however, was always God-centred. Just

as the needle of the compass always points to the north, so also her mind was always directed toward God. Mercilessly she would drive away all distracting thoughts. Swami Ramakrishnananda related the following incident:

One day, after Sri Ramakrishna had passed away, some of his disciples went to see her and found her room full of mosquitoes and other troublesome creatures. Although she did not appear to mind them and kept on repeating the name of the Lord, it distressed them to see her in such discomfort, so the next day one of the disciples brought her a mosquito-curtain. That night when she sat down to repeat the Name, she found her mind constantly wandering to the curtain, thinking whether a cockroach or a rat might not be eating off a corner of it. Seeing this she said, 'What! This wretched curtain thus to take my mind away from my Gopala!' and without ado she made it up into a bundle and sat down again to her devotions with the mosquitoes all about her.

The next morning we were just getting up at the Math when Gopaler-ma appeared. She had walked all the way (at least five miles) and must have started at three o'clock. She laid the bundle down

'What is it?' someone asked.

'It is the curtain you gave me yesterday. It takes my mind away from God. I don't want it,' was her answer; and nothing could persuade her to take it back.<sup>6</sup>

One day in 1887 Gopaler-ma came to Balaram's house in Calcutta. A number of devotees were also there who were aware of her high spiritual experiences, and they began to ask her some questions. She said to them: 'Look, I am an old, illiterate woman. What do I know about the scriptures? Why don't you ask Sharat, Yogin, and Tarak?' But they persisted, so finally she said: 'Wait, let me ask Gopāla. O Gopāla, I don't understand what they are talking about. Why don't you answer their question? Hello, Gopāla says this...' In this way Gopaler-ma answered the

6. *Message of the East* vol IX, 1920, p. 165.

abstruse questions of the devotees. They were amazed. That remarkable question and answer session ended abruptly, however, when Gopaler-ma suddenly said: 'O Gopāla, why are you going away? Will you not answer their questions anymore?' But Gopāla had left.

In 1897, Swami Vivekananda returned to India from his first visit to the West. Later he sent three of his western disciples, Sister Nivedita, Mrs. Ole Bull, and Miss Josephine MacLeod, to Kamarhati to meet Gopaler-ma. She received them cordially and kissed them. As she had no other furniture in her room, they sat on her bed. She then served them some puffed rice and sweet coconut balls and shared some of her spiritual experiences with them. When they returned to Calcutta, Swami Vivekananda said: 'Ah! This is the *old* India that you have seen, the India of prayers and tears, of vigils and fasts, that is passing away.'

Once two women devotees came to Swami Vivekananda at Balaram's house requesting initiation, but he sent them to Gopaler-ma. She was reluctant, however, and said to Swamiji: 'My son, what do I know about initiation? I am a poor widow.'

Swamiji replied with a smile: 'Are you an ordinary person? You have attained perfection through Japa. If you cannot give initiation then who can? Let me tell you, why don't you give your own Ishtamantra to them? It will serve their purpose. Moreover, what will you do with your mantra anymore?'

Gopaler-ma initiated the women but was unwilling to accept any gift or offering from them. When she was persuaded, she followed the custom and accepted two rupees from them so that the disciples might not be hurt. She had no greed or desire for worldly objects. Her simple instruction was:

Listen, offer your body and mind to God. Initiation is not an insignificant thing. Do not leave your seat without repeating ten thousand japam in each sitting. While practising spiritual discipline disconnect yourself from the thoughts of the world. Start your japam at 3 o'clock in the morning so that nobody is aware of it; and again practise in the evening.

She had immense love for the disciples of Sri Ramakrishna. When the news of Swami Vivekananda's passing away reached Kamarhati, she was in her room. She cried out in pain, 'Ah, Naren is gone?' She felt dizzy, saw darkness all around, and fell to the floor, fracturing her right elbow.

Gopaler-ma was then living there by herself, although the place was known to be haunted. During the time that the landlady lived there, a guard looked after the place, but since no one was there now to help her, Swami Saradananda appointed a gardener and sent a woman to take care of her broken arm. Seeing the attendant, Gopaler-ma said: 'Why have you come here? You will have to face a lot of hardship. My Gopāla takes care of me. Where will you sleep? You must find a room. They are all under lock and key, so you will have to ask the priest to open one for you. Let me tell you frankly at the outset that there are some evil spirits around. Whenever you hear any strange noise, repeat your mantra whole-heartedly.' At night the attendant slept opposite Gopaler-ma's room, and she heard the sound of heavy, hurried footsteps coming from the roof and a rapping noise through the window. It was quite a test for her.

Gopaler-ma had to face many such ordeals during her long stay in that garden-house by herself. She never felt lonely, however, for her beloved Gopāla was with her day and night. Moreover, she did not care for a companion because it might interfere with her visions. As she had

very little body-consciousness, she was reluctant to take personal service from others. Independence is happiness and dependence is misery. She practised this Vedantic teaching in her life.

In 1903, Gopaler-ma became seriously ill. Swami Brahmananda then sent one of his young disciples to nurse her. The boy brought fruits and vegetables for her and slept in the corner of her room. He awoke very early in the morning, however, when he heard Gopaler-ma talking with someone: 'Wait, wait! Even the birds have not yet sung. Let the morning come, my sweet darling, and then I shall take you for a bath in the Ganga.'

Later the young disciple said: 'No one else lives in your room. With whom were you talking this morning?'

'Don't you know that Gopāla lives with me? I was trying to control his naughtiness,' she replied.

As her health grew worse, the disciples of Sri Ramakrishna arranged for her to be moved to Balaram's house in Calcutta. But Sister Nivedita expressed a desire to serve this saintly woman, so Gopaler-ma was taken to her residence. A cook was appointed, and Kusum, one of Gopaler-ma's disciples, attended to her personal needs. In return Gopaler-ma gave Nivedita maternal affection and support. Her presence in the house created an atmosphere of spiritual serenity.

'I feel thrilled,' Nivedita wrote in a letter at that time, 'when I am with Gopaler-ma. The words of Saint Elizabeth sound in my ears, "What is this to me that the Mother of my Lord should visit me?" For I believe that in Gopaler-ma is sainthood as great as that of a *Paramahansa*—a soul fully free. I feel that if I can only worship her enough, blessings will descend on all whom I love, through her. Could more be said?'

To see God in everything is the culmination of Vedantic experience. Gopaler-ma had a pet cat in whom she used to see Gopāla. One day it was lying peacefully on Nivedita's lap when Kusum came and pushed it away. Immediately Gopaler-ma cried out: 'What have you done? What have you done? Gopāla is going away—he is gone.'

Those who carry the Lord in their hearts always enjoy festivity. They never get bored or pass a single dull moment. The body of Gopaler-ma was deteriorating day by day, but her mind was floating in bliss. When the Holy Mother went to see her, she sighed, 'Gopāla, you have come. Look, you have sat on my lap all these days; now you take me on your lap.' The Holy Mother took Gopaler-ma's head on her lap and caressed her affectionately.

The end came on July 8, 1906. Gopaler-ma was carried to the Ganga where she breathed her last at dawn, touching the holy water of the river. A monk bent over her and whispered in her ear the words that the Hindu loves to hear in his last hour, 'Om Ganga Narayana! Om Ganga Narayana Brahma!'

Thus the curtain fell on the divine drama of Gopaler-ma. The monks went to her room and found her two most precious possessions, the rosary which had passed through her fingers millions and millions of times, and a picture of Sri Ramakrishna who had appeared before her as Gopāla. Nivedita took the rosary, and the picture was sent to Belur Math where it still rests on the altar of the Holy Mother's temple.

Once, being asked for some advice from a disciple, Gopaler-ma said: 'Ask advice from Gopāla. He is within you. No one can give better advice than he. This is the truth. Cry with a longing heart and you will reach him.'

(Concluded)

# HINDU PHILOSOPHICAL INFLUENCES ON THE WRITERS OF EMERSONIAN PERIOD

DR. UMESH PATRI

The Transcendentalists of America were brought up and nourished in an atmosphere charged with the knowledge of Indian scriptures, and they brought into their vision a curious blending of both cultures, Indian and American, and developed an eclectic attitude to life. The three major contemporaries of Emerson, Edgar Allan Poe (1809-1849), Herman Melville (1819-1891) and Walt Whitman (1819-1892) who were to a considerable extent influenced by Transcendentalism, were also, to some extent, influenced by Indian philosophy.

Though consciously an anti-Transcendentalist, Poe used some ideas of Transcendentalism as well as the philosophy inherent in the *Upaniṣads* and the *Bhagavad-Gītā* in his famous prose work *Eureka*, which appeared in 1848. Eleven years later, Sarah Helen Whitman wrote: 'It has been said that his (Poe's) theory, as expressed in 'Eureka', of the Universal diffusion of Deity in and through all things, is identical with the Brahminical faith as expressed in the *Bhagavad-Gītā*.<sup>1</sup> One of the central ideas in the essay is the self-diffusion of God in the creation, though according to the Christian belief God created the universe standing apart from his creation. Poe says that God 'passes his Eternity in perpetual variation of concentrated Self and almost Infinite Self-diffusion. What you call the universe is but his present expansive existence.'<sup>2</sup> That

the universe is an 'expansive existence' of the creator has been the central doctrine of the Hindu cosmo-genesis. God is supposed to have created the universe out of Himself and He has Himself become the indwelling spirit of every atom in the phenomenal world. The first line of *Iśa-Upaniṣad* reads thus: *īśāvāsyamidam sarvam yatkiṃca jagatyām jagat*. 'All this, whatever moves in this moving world, is enveloped by God. Therefore find your enjoyment in renunciation...' The following verse from *Taittirīya-Upaniṣad* also agree with Poe's theory of creation. The verse reads: 'He (God) thought: let me become many, let me be born. He performed austerity. Having performed austerity He created all this, whatever is here. Having created it, into it, indeed, he entered.'<sup>3</sup> Also about the dissolution of the universe Poe holds a view which is similar to the Hindu concept of *pralaya*. Poe writes: 'The final globe of globes will instantaneously disappear, and...God will remain all in all.'<sup>4</sup> Hindus believe that there will always be a fresh creation after each dissolution which will again be followed by another creation in a cyclic pattern. Poe also believed in this kind of cyclic pattern in creation. In his own words '...another action and reaction of the Divine will... a novel universe swelling into existence, and then subsiding into nothingness, at every throb of the Heart Divine?'<sup>5</sup> We have a parallel theory of cosmic dissolution in the *Upani-*

1. Sarah Helen Whitman, *Edgar Poe and his Critics* (New York: Rudd and Carleton, 1860) pp. 65-66.

2. Poe, *The Work of E.A. Poe*, edited by E. Murkhan (New York and London: Funk & Wagnalls, 1904) 'Eureka', 9, p. 154.

3. *Taittirīya-Upaniṣad* 2.6. Dr Radhakrishnan, *The Principal Upaniṣads* (London: George Allen & Unwin 1953) p. 548.

4. 'Eureka', *Works* 9, p. 150

5. *ibid* p. 151.

yads and in the Gita. The verse pertaining to the concept in the *Bhagavad-Gītā*, runs as follows:

Taking as base My own material-nature  
I send forth again and again  
This whole host of beings,  
Which is powerless, by the power of  
(My) material nature.<sup>6</sup>

Towards the conclusion of his essay one finds a profound vision of soul or Atman and God or Brahman which looks as though the lines had been lifted from the pages of the *Upanisad*. Poe writes: 'No thinking being lives who, at some luminous point of his life of thought, has not felt himself lost amid the surges of futile effects at understanding or believing, that anything exists *greater than his own* soul . that no one soul is inferior to another—that nothing is, or can be superior to any one soul—that each soul is, in part, its own God.'<sup>7</sup> The identity of the soul and God or the individual self and the Brahman is the essence of the teaching of Vedanta.

Though Poe appears at times opposed to Transcendentalism, there are many instances in this essay which clearly show his indebtedness to Emerson. Poe's essay has been compared with Emerson's *Nature*.<sup>8</sup> There is a clear relationship between Emerson's conception of the primal unity of the universe pervaded by the Over-Soul and Poe's concept of the unity of the universe. Arnold Smithlin remarks: 'In his assertion of the unity of man and the cosmos, and of reliance upon intuition as the best means of realizing that ultimate

Truth, Poe is following the main tenets of the Transcendentalists.'<sup>9</sup>

Like Poe, Herman Melville, it is assumed by some critics, was also influenced by Hindu mythology. Though during his round-the-world tours he never visited India, he was avidly interested in Indian lore, a fact which is evidenced in the discussion between Melville and the poet Oliver Wendell Holmes. The following passage suggests this fact: 'At length, somehow, the conversation drifted to East Indian religions and mythologies, and soon there arose a discussion between Holmes and Melville, which was conducted with the most amazing skill and brilliancy on both sides. It lasted for hours...'<sup>10</sup> Besides, there are evidences to show that he had read W.J. Mickle's essay 'Inquiry into the Religious Tenets and Philosophy of the Brahmins', Thomas Maurice's *Indian Antiquities* and an article on 'Hindu Superstition' in Chamber's *Miscellany of Useful and Entertaining Knowledge*.<sup>11</sup> *Moby Dick* contains a large number of references to Hindu imagery and symbolism. The central symbol of *Moby Dick*, the white Whale, may have been forged out of his knowledge of Indian mythology, particularly the concept of Matsya Avatāra of Viṣṇu. Viṣṇu, the chief God of the Hindu pantheon was born as a fish in one of his incarnations. H. B. Kulkarni in his book *Moby Dick: A Hindu Avatar: A Study of Hindu Myth and Thought*,<sup>12</sup> has made

6. Franklin Edgerton, *The Bhagavad-Gītā* (Massachusetts: Harvard University Press, 1972) 9.8.

7. 'Eureka', *Works*, 9, pp 152-3.

8. Patrick F. Quinn, 'Poe's *Eureka* and Emerson's *Nature*', *Emerson Society Quarterly*, 31 (2nd quarter, 1963) p. 4-7.

9. Arnold Smithlin, 'Eureka. Poe as Transcendentalist', *Emerson Society Quarterly*, 39 (2nd quarter, 1965) p 28.

10. M.B. Field, *Memories of Many Men and some Women*, quoted by James Baird, *Ishmael* (Baltimore: John Hopkin's Press 1956) p. 176

11. John T. Reid, *Indian Influences in American Literature and Thought* (New Delhi: Indian Council for Cultural Relations, 1965) p. 53.

12. H.B. Kulkarni, *Moby Dick: A Hindu Avatar: A Study of Hindu Myth and Thought* (Utah: Utah State Univ. Press, 1970).

a detailed analysis of the parallels existing between Melville's concept of the white Whale and Viṣṇu's incarnation as a fish. In the chapter 'Monstrous Pictures of Whales' in *Moby Dick* Melville refers to the concept of Matsya Avatāra:

Now, by all odds, the most ancient extant portrait anyways purporting to be the Whale's, is to be found in the famous cavern-pagoda of Elephanta, in India. The Brahmins maintain that in the almost endless sculptures of that immemorial pagoda, all the trades and pursuits, every conceivable avocation of man, were prefigured ages before any of them actually came into being. No wonder then, that in some sort our noble profession of whaling should have been there shadowed forth. The Hindu Whale referred to, occurs in a separate department of the wall, depicting the incarnation of Vishnu in the form of Leviathan, learnedly known as the Matsya Avatar.<sup>13</sup>

The reference to Elephanta caves in the passage is, undoubtedly, based on a confusion of sources. In Elephanta cave there is no representation of Viṣṇu as a fish or whale. Melville must have seen the picture of Matsya Avatāra in Thomas Maurice's *Indian Antiquities* and, as Howard P. Vincent observes, he 'Got it mixed up in hasty recollection with an account of Elephanta in the same volume.'<sup>14</sup> Melville also makes a similar confusion in his concept of 'dark Hindu half of nature' referred to in *Moby Dick*, suggesting that the dark side of the world is essentially a Hindu view of world. Despite these conceptual errors, the fact remains that Melville was acquainted with Indian myths and employed them wherever he found them interesting and appropriate to developing his own concepts. The concept of Viṣṇu's

ten incarnations has been used in a satirical vein in *The Confidence Man*, a novel dealing with how one person in ten different guises indulges in confidence game with the passengers in the boats on the Mississippi in order to swindle them.

The influence of Indian scriptures on Walt Whitman has been an established fact. His *Leaves of Grass* is replete with concepts which are typically Hindu. There exist several ideas in *Leaves of Grass* which are identical with the ideas of Advaita Vedanta and its source books such as the Upaniṣads and the Gita. In 1866 shortly after the publication of *Leaves of Grass*, Thoreau greeted Whitman, saying that the book was 'wonderfully like the Orientals.'<sup>15</sup> Malcolm Cowley remarks that 'Most of the Whitman's doctrines, though by no means all of them, belong to the mainstream of Indian philosophy.'<sup>16</sup> S. Radhakrishnan has categorically affirmed the Indian inspiration behind Whitman's writings: 'Whitman turns to the East in his anxiety to escape from the complexities of civilization and the bewilderments of a baffled intellectualism.'<sup>17</sup> Emerson himself thought that *Leaves of Grass* very much resembled the Gita, 'a mixture of the *Bhagavad-Gita* and the *New York Herald*.'<sup>18</sup> The concept of the Atman (individual self) merging into the Brahman (the Supreme Self), the concept of transfiguration and several other concepts basic to Indian thought are employed by Whitman in poems like 'Song

13. Herman Melville, *Moby Dick or the White Whale* (New York: Harper & Brothers Pub., 1950) LV, 292.

14. Howard P. Vincent, *The Trying-out of Moby Dick*, quoted by Reid, p. 53

15. Malcolm Cowley, Introduction to Walt Whitman's *Leaves of Grass: The First* (1855) Edition (rpt. New York: Viking Press, 1967) p. XII.

16. *ibid.*, p. XXII.

17. S. Radhakrishnan, *Eastern Religions and Western Thought*, (London: Oxford University Press, 1940) p. 249.

18. William S. Kennedy, *Reminiscences of Walt Whitman*, quoted by J. P. Rao Rayapati, *Early American Interest in Vedanta* (Bombay: Asia Publishing House, 1973) p. 12.



of *Myself*, 'A Passage to India' etc. Although Whitman denies having read the Gita before the publication of *Leaves of Grass*, there are strong grounds to disbelieve him. We might quote a few lines from the Gita and compare it with the lines from *Leaves of Grass*. Kṛṣṇa says:

A leaf, a flower, a fruit or water,  
Who presents to Me with devotion,  
That offering of devotion I  
Accept from the devout-souled (giver).<sup>19</sup>

The same idea is given a voice in the lines of 'Song of Myself':

A child said *What is the grass?* fetching it  
to me with full hands;  
How could I answer the child? I do not know  
what it is any more than he.  
I guess it must be the flag of my disposition,  
out of hopeful green stuff woven.  
Or I guess it is the handkerchief of the Lord,  
a scented gift ...<sup>20</sup>

Such parallels can be endlessly cited.

However, Whitman curiously denies to have ever read the Gita before the publication of *Leaves of Grass*. His personal copy of Gita was a translation by Cockborn Thomson which was presented to him as a Christmas gift by an English man named Thomas Dixon in 1875, after the publication of the *Leaves of Grass*, but one can assume that Whitman might have been familiar with the Indian text before he was presented with one by his English friend. Although Whitman may not have read the Gita before the writing of *Leaves of Grass*, he had sound knowledge of Vedic literature—a fact corroborated by Dorothy F. Mercer when she says that there is a great similarity between Whitman's prose

and Sanskrit prose in general.<sup>21</sup> What she implies is that the literary atmosphere during the 1840 and 1850, being charged with Hindu philosophy, must have unconsciously penetrated Whitman's mind and thinking: 'It was in this atmosphere, impregnated with interest in Hindu philosophy, literature, and religion that Whitman reached manhood.'<sup>22</sup> Emerson might also have been a patent influence on him. In 1847 Whitman reviewed Emerson's 'Spiritual Laws' and subsequently underwent a spiritual transformation, which might have been due to the indirect influence of Indian thought filtered through Emerson's writings. Whitman expressed his gratitude to Emerson for his transformation, saying: 'I was simmering, simmering, simmering, Emerson brought me to a boil.'<sup>23</sup> Whitman may also have been interested in Yoga. O.K. Nambiar claims that in section five of the 'Song of Myself' Whitman has a sudden burst of psycho-physical energy which is very much akin to the unfolding of the energy hidden in *kundalinī*, the 'serpent power' that lies coiled at the base of the spinal column and awakens when there is some spiritual progress in the yogic discipline.<sup>24</sup> The 'Song of Myself' describes the experience of unitive life which is possible for a person whose hidden energy has bloomed.

Another nineteenth century poet and contemporary of Emerson, John Greenleaf Whittier (1807-1892) was influenced both by Indian philosophy and the Transcen-

21. Dorothy F. Mercer, *Leaves of Grass and Bhagavad-Gītā: A Comparative Study*, Diss. University of California (1933) p. 1.

22. *ibid.*, p. 18.

23. Cf. V.K. Chari, *Whitman in the Light of Vedantic Mysticism: An Interpretation* (Lincoln: University of Nebraska Press, 1964) p. 64.

24. O.K. Nambiar, *Maha Yogi Walt Whitman: New Light on Yoga* (Bangalore: Jeevan Publications, 1978).

19. *The Bhagavad-Gītā*, 9.26, trans. Edgerton.

20. Walt Whitman, *Leaves of Grass* (Philadelphia: David McKay, 1888) p. 33

dentalism of Emerson. In 1852 Emerson lent him a copy of the Gita which presumably inspired him. The impression he had about the Gita is recorded in a letter written to Emerson: 'I will ever keep it until I restore it to thee personally in exchange for George Fox (the founder of the Society of Friends, or Quakers). It is a wonderful book—and has greatly excited my curiosity to know more of the religious literature of the East.'<sup>25</sup> He was stimulated by books like Edwin Arnold's *The Light of Asia*, Alger's *The Poetry of the Orient* and Max Muller's *Sacred Books of the East*. He also read Kendersley's *Specimen of the Hindu Theatre* and was familiar with the *Journal of the Asiatic Society of Bengal*. Arthur Christy is of the opinion that he offered in his 'Poetic work more poems on Oriental themes, more paraphrases of Oriental maxims and more imitations of Oriental models than may be found in Emerson's verse...'<sup>26</sup> Poems like 'Miriam', 'The Preacher', 'The Over Heart', and 'The Brewing of Soma' etc. deal specifically with Indian themes. The concept of Over-Heart is very close to Emerson's concept of Over-Soul. Both are translations

of the Hindu term *adhyātman*. He was interested in the Brahmo Samaj, and translated a few of its hymns. In his introduction to these verses he wrote: 'I have attempted this paraphrase of the hymns of the Brahmo Samaj of India, as I find them in Mozoomdar's account of the devotional exercises of that remarkable religious development which has attracted far less attention and sympathy from the Christian world than it deserves, as a fresh revelation of the direct action of the Divine Spirit upon the human heart.'<sup>27</sup> A sample of lines where he has been influenced by India is quoted below for an understanding of the impact of Indian thought on his poetic sensibility.

And India's mystics sang aright,  
Of the One Life pervading all—  
One Being's tidal rise and fall  
In soul and form, in sound and sight—  
Eternal outflow and recall<sup>28</sup>

and

Truth is one,  
And, in all lands beneath the sun,  
Whose hath eyes to see may see  
The tokens of its unity.<sup>29</sup>

<sup>25</sup>. Whittier, *The Letters of John Greenleaf Whittier*, ed. John B. Pickard (London: Belknap Press of Harvard University Press, 1975) II p. 203.

<sup>26</sup>. Arthur Christy, 'Orientalism in New England: Whittier', *American Literature*, I (1929-1930) p. 372.

<sup>27</sup>. Whittier, *The Works of John Greenleaf Whittier* (Boston and New York Houghton, Mifflin Co., 1891) II, p. 340

<sup>28</sup>. *ibid.*, pp. 249-50.

<sup>29</sup>. *ibid.*, p. 293.

# THE STORY OF AN EPOCH

(A Review-Article)

The Story of an Epoch. by Swami Shraddhananda. Published by Sri Ramakrishna Math, Mylapore, Madras 600 004. 1982. Pp. viii+298. Rs. 25.

This is essentially the story of the life of Swami Virajananda, the sixth President of the Ramakrishna Math and Ramakrishna Mission. It is also the story of an epoch, an epoch in the Ramakrishna Movement, an epoch in the history of India's spiritual renaissance. The rationale for this simultaneous approach can be found in Andre Maurois who in his *The Ethics of Biography* wrote, 'A biographer has a right to leave around his central figure a margin, more or less wide, of contemporary facts. Only, if he leaves the margin too wide, he runs the risk of no longer writing a biography, while not writing a good history either. Now, where should he draw the line or how the facts are chosen? The biographer should consider as relevant all the facts that had a direct influence on formation of the hero, on the adventures of his soul, or on his personal action.' The author of the present book seems to have effectively and efficiently followed this guideline. His judicious selection and arrangement of material have helped him to produce a dependable history of the Ramakrishna Movement against the perspective of a vivid account of a modern saint's life and a true picture of his character.

Born in the year 1873, Swami Virajananda had the blessed privilege of coming into contact with the direct disciples of Sri Ramakrishna at the age of eighteen when he was a college student. Though he had his spiritual initiation from the Holy Mother Sri Sarada Devi, he is popularly known as a disciple of Swami Vivekananda. The latter had ordained him as a *sannyasin* of the Ramakrishna Order. Greatly fascinated by Swamiji, Swami Virajananda considered himself filled with the inspiration of Swamiji. Regarding his first impression

of Swamiji he wrote, 'His eyes were captivating, just as the American newspapers had said. Light appeared to emanate from his entire body. What a charming figure—combining beauty and power, a nonchalant air and a dazzling personality! My first reactions were love, devotion, and a sense of fear.' In his daily life, too, Swami Virajananda caught the glint of Swamiji's towering personality. It shone through all he said, all he did, all he was. It gave him power and insight and an authority which no one could dispute. The last he used sparingly. Even as the sixth President of the Ramakrishna Order he guided the members of the Order as well as the devotees rather by love and gentle words than by stringent methods.

'It is perhaps as difficult to write a good life as to live one', observed Lytton Strachey. The author Swami Shraddhananda, a senior member of the Ramakrishna Order, served Swami Virajananda as his private secretary for more than a decade. His own spiritual sensitivity and keen observation helped him to have a deeper understanding of Swami Virajananda. Besides, he is a good writer in both Bengali and English. All these factors have helped him to produce a faithful and beautiful portrait of a soul pursuing the adventures of spiritual life. A few years after Swami Virajananda passed away the author set himself the task of writing *Atīter Smṛti* in Bengali which was published by the Ramakrishna Math, Belur, Howrah, in 1957. The present volume is an English rendering of the same.

A biography, though circumscribed by its subject, is in fact more extensive in its scope than the annals or history proper. In *The Story of an Epoch* the reader finds

at some places the plainness or nakedness of narration characteristic of annals. At some other places he can see the loftiness and gravity of general history. Again, to make the reader familiar with Swami Virajananda's private action and conversations the author has gone into the minute details of some circumstances and trivial incidents of his life.

No doubt, good biographies can only be written from personal knowledge. But what is known can seldom be immediately told, and when it might be told, the details--the delicate features of the mind, the subtle nuances of character, and the minute peculiarities of conduct—are obliterated. The present biography is free from such limitations. The life dealt with in it is that of a saint. And a saint's life is chiefly an interior life. This luminous inner world of spiritual consciousness is beyond the reach and understanding of ordinary people. But our author has succeeded in giving us sparkling glimpses of Swami Virajananda's inner life and the way the holy influences of the Holy Mother and Swami Vivekananda silently shaped it.

The immediate attraction of *The Story of an Epoch* is twofold: (a) it appeals to our curiosity about the personality of Swami Virajananda, who very ably represents the second generation of pioneers of the Ramakrishna Movement; and (b) it appeals to our interest in factual knowledge about the social context and the important events that happened around Swami Virajananda. These two objectives, one to portray the personality of Swami Virajananda and the other to portray the formative period of the Ramakrishna Movement, have been cleverly inter-woven. Again, following the analytical method, the writer has projected detached pictures of Swami Virajananda and his surroundings with continuity and speed. The total

effect produced thereby is that of bringing back to life the past.

Even though the essential element in biography is actuality and individuality, the form of biography is no less important. While his source material must inevitably be factual, the biographer has to employ the technique of the novelist. Following this principle, our author too has taken recourse to the use of the novelist's art of vivid portrayal, suggestion, and dramatization. Yet he has not carried the use of this form too far. There is a happy blending of art and science in this book. The author has repeatedly drawn in a few sentences pen sketches of important personalities that Virajananda had come into contact with in the form of his reminiscences of them, which he gave when the news of their death had reached him. This flashback technique has not, however, disturbed the continuity of the story at any point. And it reaches its height when the author discusses the final departure of Swami Virajananda from the Ashrama at the mountain village of Shyamala Tal which he had founded and loved so much.

The author has also with clear insight presented the story of the continuous spiritual struggle which formed an under-current to the outer life of Virajananda. It was essentially a struggle between the contemplative's life and the life of an active worker. Swami Vivekananda said, 'My disciples are to emphasize work more than austerities.' This command often clashed with austerity and inwardness, the two salient elements of Swami Virajananda's character. But it goes to the credit of Swami Virajananda that he successfully struck a harmony between active life and contemplation, work and worship, and the author has very ably presented the process of its development.

Barring some mistakes like the use of the word *Nisiram* in place of *Nasiram*,

the play written by the great Bengali dramatist Girish Chandra Ghosh (p. 264), and the mention of August 19, 1930 in place of August 19, 1927 as the date of Mahasamadhi of Swami Saradananda (p. 166), the production is excellent. This book will

be heartily welcomed by the devotees of Sri Ramakrishna and sincere spiritual aspirants. It is a significant contribution to the documentation of the Ramakrishna Movement.

SWAMI PRABHANANDA  
Belur Math

## REVIEWS AND NOTICES

**THE RELIGION OF MANIPUR:** by DR SAROJ NALINI PARRATT Published by Firma KLM (Pvt) Limited, 257 B, Bepin Behari Ganguly Street, Calcutta-700 012 India 1980 Pp. xvi+218 Rs. 50.

The book under review is based on Dr. Parratt's doctoral dissertation and deals with the religio-cultural history of Manipur, a small northeastern State of Indian Union inhabited by a people whose origins are obscure. The treatise is divided into three parts: Beliefs, Rituals and Historical development of the Religion of Manipur. These three parts are again sub-divided into ten chapters, of which the first contains a brief narration of the origins of the Manipuris and an important account of the different sources and principal works which are to be tapped for the historical reconstruction of the religion of Manipur. Though the scope of the present disquisition is limited, yet a little more detailed treatment of the origins of the Manipuris would certainly satisfy the inquisitiveness of general readers and researchers alike.

The second chapter gives an elaborate account of the pre-Hindu deities venerated by the Meiteis. These deities or *umang lai*, as they are commonly called in Meitei dialect, are classified broadly into four groups: (a) ancestral deities (b) deities associated with a particular tribe (c) household deities and (d) tutelary deities. Here the authoress narrates many interesting myths and legends associated with these deities. Evidently most of these mythological accounts contain elements which are characteristically totemistic and animistic. A striking feature of the Meitei mythology is its conception of High God, the Supreme Deity, in Atyā Guru Sidaba which literally means 'Sky-Guru-immortal' or immortal celestial guru who is entrusted with the job of creation of man and two other living beings such as frogs and apes.

In the third chapter Dr. Parratt has offered

a detailed description of the various public festivals of the people of Manipur falling under two broad groups: those of Hindu origin and those traditionally Meitei. The Hindu festivals, such as Holi, Janmāṣṭami, Ratha Jātrā, Bāruni etc. which are observed by the Manipuris differ slightly from their usual Hindu patterns. These Hindu festivals are tempered to some extent by local faiths. Of all the traditional Meitei festivals, Lāi Harāoba (festival for pleasing God) is unique, for it mirrors the entire culture of the Manipuri people. From the fascinating account given in this book, it becomes impressively clear that Lāi Harāoba is a composite festival where sacred lyrics, traditional music and Meitei dance are beautifully blended together, thus making it a unique feature of Manipuri culture.

Part three dealing with the historical development of the Religion of Manipur is the most significant part of the book. By undertaking a dispassionate and critical examination of available data and archaeological reports including the Phayeng Copper Plate, Dr. Parratt has forcefully controverted the claim made by a section of Manipuri scholars that Vaishnavite influences had percolated into Manipur as early as the 7th century. The pre-Hindu period or Medieval period of the history of Manipur (from 1467 to 1678 A.D.) had seen the influences of Hinduism on Manipuri Religion though apparently ineffective in attracting the Meiteis from their indigenous faith. Nevertheless, it offered the preparatory ground for the advent of Vaiṣṇavism in the 18th century when it received royal patronage during the reign of Charai Rongba (1697-1706 A.D.) Vaiṣṇavism came to be recognized as the official religion of the State during the reign of Garib Niwaz (1709-1748 A.D.).

The religious history of Manipur can never be complete without mentioning the role of

Bhagyachandra in consolidating and confirming Chaitanyaite Vaiṣṇavism as the State religion of Manipur, though not in an undiluted form. In view of this, Dr. Parratt rightly observes 'the Vaiṣṇavism practised in Manipur became peculiarly Manipuri Vaiṣṇavism in form, adopting aspects of Meitei culture and being modified by it.' (p. 169) Bhagyachandra was also responsible for the introduction of *rāsa-līlā* into the traditional dances, especially on Lāi Harāoba, which ultimately became an important feature of Manipuri religious art and also one of the classical schools of Indian dance.

Dr. Parratt has discussed her theme in the broader perspective of rich Manipuri culture. Her approach is principally historical. She has consulted almost all the available works on ancient Manipuri culture and religion and utilized a good deal of materials available in Manipuri language, some of them in manuscript form. Her personal knowledge of this religion has enabled her to present her views with much clarity. Notwithstanding a faithful presentation of the various aspects of the religion of Manipur the authoress has not thrown any light on their spiritual significance and metaphysical basis. Nevertheless, the work on the whole is the result of painstaking research and sound scholarship. Late National Professor Suniti Kumar Chatterji, who incidentally was one of the examiners of the thesis on which the book is based, has written an excellent foreword to the book. A good bibliography, a useful index, a glossary of Manipuri terms and a number of black and white plates have undoubtedly enhanced the value of the treatise. Indeed it is a most useful publication and provides the students of Indian Religions with valuable materials for a highly interesting comparative study.

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THE ENTIRE AVESTA IS ONE WHOLE.  
BY H.S. SPENCER. Published by H.P. Vaswani,  
A6 Sadhu Vaswani Kunj, Poona 411 001 Pp  
111. Rs. 15/-.

Whether an extant religious text is one whole or consists of interpolations and additions is one of the most delicate and persistent problems in the history of religions. To an objective critic a scriptural text might appear to be a collection of the work of several generations of individuals. But to a devout insider the text

comes down from the divine source in its entirety. A phenomenologist or a religious scientist will take into consideration both these approaches. The observations of the outsider and the faith of the insider have to be viewed together to reach any sound conclusion. As in the case of the *Bhagavad-Gītā*, wherein one has to embrace the discriminating findings of Richard Garbe and Rudolf Otto along with the unitary conclusions of Madhusudan Saraswati and Franklin Edgerton. Similarly in the case of the *Avestā* we shall have to include under the same group the views of European scholars like Drs. Geiger and Geldner who have analysed the text on linguistic and compositional grounds along with the views of Kaviraj A.F. Khabarder and E.K. Kanga who have tried to interpret it in terms of the spirit.

The Avestan phenomenon is a fascinating chapter of human history wherein the Indian mind finds not only fraternal coincidences but also confirmations of its entire religio-philosophical beginnings. The Mazdayasni *din* and the Vedic *dharma* are the two streams coming out from the same fountain-head. Fortunately we have almost complete unanimity of opinion about the authenticity of the *Rg-Veda Samhitā*. Regarding other portions of this and other Vedas we have to face chronological and textual controversies. In the case of the *Avestā* the controversy becomes more prominent partly because the adherents of that faith were exterminated in their homeland and partly because they do not have that strong teacher-disciple transmission system of the Brahminic tradition which has been able to retain the Vedic texts without the slightest mutilation.

The *Gāthās* are said to be the genuine formulations of the Persian prophet Zarathustra. Regarding other portions of the *Avestā* like the *Yāsna* and the *Yāstis*, they are supposed to be of either prior or later origin. There is, of course, one view that the prophet himself is the source of the entire text. The author of the book under review has tried to establish, through several of his writings on the subject, that the *Avestā*, in its present form, is one whole and the question of a younger or older *Avestā* is meaningless.

The author of this book holds that prior to the birth of the prophet the most advanced views of the time were contained in the Aryan Mazdayasni faith and the scriptures of the age of Zoroaster consisted mostly of the *Yāsna* and the *Yāstis* (being natural forms of adoration of the powers of the Nature). The Holy Zarathu-

stra's work was directed towards the enlargement of the Mazdayasni concept and also the introduction of several improvements and changes in the scripture. The adoration of various heavenly bodies in the *Yāshts* and the concept of one Creator of the universe advanced by the prophet clearly show the chronological priority of the *Yāshts* over the *Gāthās*.

The author of the title tries to establish that both *Yāsna* and *Yāshts* were composed much earlier (almost contemporaneous to the *Rg-Veda Samhitās*) and the advent of the prophet marks improvements in the extant texts of his time. The prophet adopted the texts to suit his own personal revelation. The prophet accepted the then existing texts and the entire Mazdayasni *din* (cf. *Yāsna Ha* 71) except for such changes as he had to introduce to bring them into line with the tenets of his own revelation. Thus there is no question of an earlier or later *Avestā*. The present form of the text is one whole.

The book is a good academic discussion of this issue and gives sympathetic treatment to the traditional approach. If the original sources of the author's references had been given in full, the book would have proved to be of great help to research students.

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YOGA FOR ALL. BY YOGI MAHARSHI  
SHUDDHANANDA BHARATI. Published by Chetana  
Pvt. Ltd., 34 Rampart Row, Bombay 400 023  
1978. Pp. viii+119. Rs 20/-.

Through 62 lessons the author has given in this handy book on yoga the blueprint of a system integrating all the facets of life from the gross physical to the most spiritual. Nearly half of the book deals with human physiology which makes the reader aware of his basic strength. The next sixteen pages discuss rhythmic breathing and *āsanas*. Then follow brief discussions on prayer, meditation, yogic life etc. More than 40 diagrams and photos given in the book help the reader to grasp the functions of the human body and to gain a visual understanding of the different *āsanas*.

The author has presented a graded course for human development first in the physical plane, then in the mental plane, and ultimately in the spiritual plane. He includes both Hathayoga and Rājayoga in his scheme, and thus helps the

reader to have a clear view of the yogic life. The author is himself a well-known yogi and thus presents the subject with authority. We are glad to note that he advises *nādi-suddhi* before taking to *prāṇayāma*. Many yogic aspirants do not pay attention to *nādi-suddhi* with the result that their *prāṇayāma*-practice does not give satisfactory results. Chapters on *brahmacarya* and mental purity are well-written, but it would have been better if he had discussed some *āsanas* and *mudrās* meant for that purpose. The chapter on meditation is worth reading as he prescribes a unique process to make the mind indrawn. This process will no doubt help even a commoner who is busy all day long. Though the author has not strictly followed either Patañjali's *Yoga-Sūtras* or *Gheranda Samhitā* or any other authentic yoga treatise, yet his new synthetic method will help many aspirants.

But there are some points in the book which need clarification. For instance, the author says: "In deep sleep we live in the subtle body" (p. 109). Actually, however, in the dream state one lives in the subtle body and in deep sleep one goes to the causal body. The author further speaks of 'sound' and 'light' in deep meditation. All the sounds heard by a yogi are not *anāhata dhvani*. The sound which is heard in the left ear is produced when one's nerves get purified. But the sound in the right ear has spiritual significance. If one concentrates on this right-ear sound, one will feel that the sound shifts from the right ear to the back portion of one's head, and then to the spinal column. Thus one can know that the *anāhata dhvani* comes from the heart (*anāhata cakra*) and ultimately from the navel (*manipūra cakra*). Similarly, a novice can have the glimpse of light in meditation. The light appears in the form of a tiny star, white cloud, the sun or the moon. At first it stays for a fraction of a second though by gradual practice it can be seen for a long time. This light is experienced in the early stages, but when an aspirant proceeds further he experiences another sort of light which emanates from his head or heart, even from the whole body. This light, which appears not only during meditation but also in the *vyutthāna* stage, has got more spiritual value as it helps one to dive deep in meditation and to have spiritual illumination. We wish the author had clearly explained the difference between these two sorts of light. Sometimes it is seen that new practitioners mistake the preliminary stages

for something higher. On page 107 the author writes: "By concentrating on Time he can know the past, present and future". It is not explained what is meant by 'concentration on Time'. Patañjali says: *parināmatrayasamyamād- atitānūgatujñānam* (3:16), that is one should concentrate on *dharma*, *lakṣaṇa*, and *avasthā* to know the past and the future. There is a particular yogic *kriyā* which is prescribed for this purpose.

Spiritual practice means to bring about a

change in one's consciousness; it has nothing to do with the so-called miracles. Purity should regulate one's thought and action, and one should be eager to realize the highest Truth. This point has been stressed by the author, and we are happy to recommend this book to all those who wish to have a clear idea of the fundamentals of spiritual life.

SWAMI SOMESWARANANDA  
*Advaita Ashrama, Calcutta.*

## NEWS AND REPORTS

SRI RAMAKRISHNA ADVAITA ASHRAMA,  
KALADY

Report: for 1978-'82

**Religious.** This centre situated in a serene village sanctified by the birth of Adī Śaṅkarācārya was started in 1936. The monastery carried on daily worship, *ārati*, bhajan etc. in the newly built International Sri Ramakrishna Temple, and observed the birthdays of Sri Ramakrishna The Holy Mother, Swami Vivekananda and other religious celebrities. The Swamis conducted religious classes in the Ashrama every Sunday and delivered lectures outside on invitation.

**Educational:** The Brahmanandodaya School consisting of a Junior Basic School, a Sanskrit Upper Primary School and a High School had a total number of 1,364 pupils (boys: 802; girls: 562) during 1981-'82. The Sri Ramakrishna Gurukula and Tribal Hostel planned on the lines of ancient Hindu system of education had 147 students of whom 73 were free boarders. The Swami Vivekananda Social Education Library, open to the public, had 6,700 books, and also 18 periodicals and dailies in the reading-room.

The centre has a publication department which brought out 9 religious books during the period.

**Social welfare and medical:** A Community Hall for Harijans was built with a children's library (books. 1,618) and with facilities for indoor games. Weekly religious classes were conducted, and 200 children and expectant mothers were given nutritious bread regularly except on Sundays. The Community Hall was well utilized by the local Harijans for conducting social and cultural functions.

The centre runs a free Ayurvedic Dispensary

which treated 5,568 patients during 1981-'82.

**Brahmanandodaya High School—Development Scheme (second stage).** The above-mentioned High School is situated between the temple and the hostel. The congestion and noise of the school are disturbing the serene atmosphere of the temple and the discipline of the hostel. Therefore, it was decided to shift the High School to a place near the other schools outside the Ashrama compound. The School Development Committee with the help of friends and well-wishers could collect about Rs. 2 lakh and purchase the necessary land in 1980. The estimated cost of the 3-storey building was Rs. 7 lakh as per 1979 schedule, and the Ashrama issued an appeal for Rs. 10 lakh anticipating the increasing cost of materials and labour. By March, '82, it could collect Rs. 4,89,574/- and with it the ground-floor was completed. It is now found that owing to the unprecedented increase in cost of materials and labour, the total expenditure may go up to Rs. 14 lakh. The Ashrama requires a further sum of Rs. 9.5 lakh. The Ashrama appeals to the generous public to come forward to contribute liberally to this noble cause. Persons desirous of having their names or the names of their dear ones exhibited in a prominent place inscribed on marble plaques may do so by donating Rs. 30,000/- or more to the different classrooms. Persons, firms or companies who donate Rs. 5,000/- or more will be regarded as patrons and a list of their names displayed prominently in a similar manner. Those who contribute Rs. 1,001/- will be donor members and such names will also be displayed in the building.

The Ashrama once again appeals to all to make their contribution at the earliest in any one of the forms mentioned above. All contributions are exempt from Income Tax.



## NOTES AND COMMENTS

### *Read and Grow*

The private library movement in Kerala, said to be the largest of its kind in Asia, has for its motto, 'Read and Grow', given to it by its far-sighted founder who began his career as a modest school teacher. Not all books help people to grow, though. Some books only waste one's time and energy, while some others destroy one's moral stamina and spiritual sensibility.

A good book is one which brings noble thoughts, inflames the best in man and stimulates and guides his intellectual, moral and spiritual growth. To this category belong some of the great religious books of the world. Among them the *Gospel of Sri Ramakrishna* by M. occupies a unique place. As its title suggests, it is the new 'gospel', good news, of hope and good will for the modern man. Its main theme is a rousing call to arise, awake and realize the divinity of the soul, to give up invidious distinctions and fanaticism, and to lead a well-integrated and harmonious life. This great book, either in its own right or as a link-scripture among the scriptures of world religions, is enabling countless people to have a new vision of life and reality. Its original Bengali version known as *Śrī Śrī Rāmākṛṣṇa Kathāmṛta* has recently taken the Bengali-speaking world by storm. According to Tapash Ganguly writing in *The Week*, a new cheap (Rs. 18/-) one-volume edition of the book has had a record sale of 2.5 lakh copies worth Rs. 45 lakh in just 45 days. 'The sale of *Kathāmṛta* from January 1 to February 14 surpassed the total sale of Marxian literature in West Bengal in the last three years', he says.

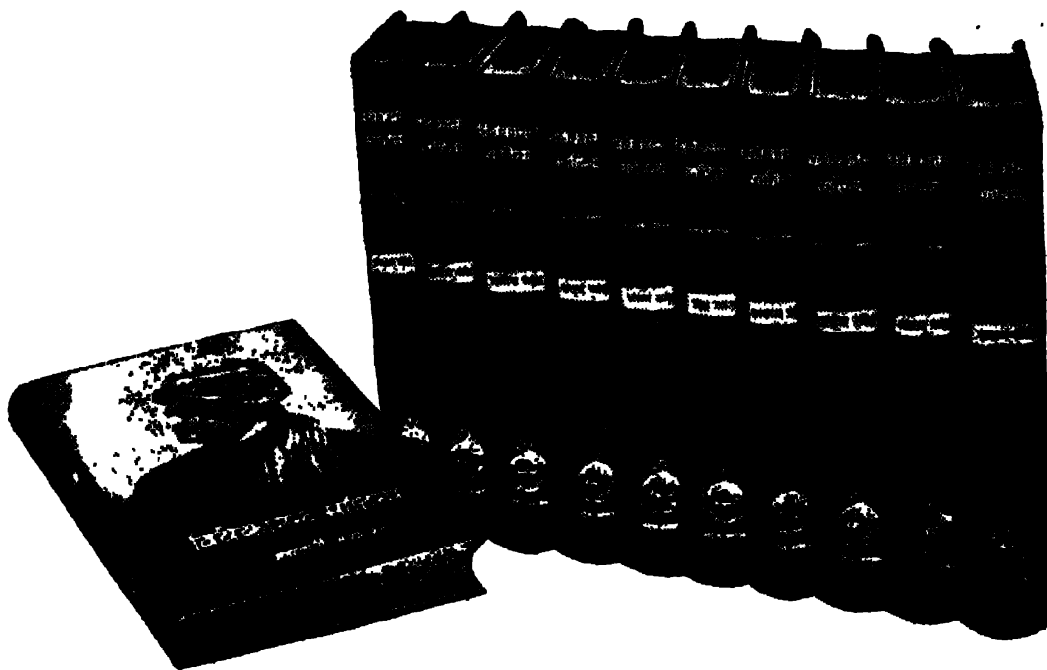
This is, however, only just one indication of a happy trend appearing in society in Bengal and other States. There is among the intelligentsia a growing awareness of the importance of religion as a key factor in personal fulfilment and in the socio-cultural transformation of the country. The 8th Calcutta Book Fair held in February 1983 has given another indication of this. 'Of the 293 new entrants, as many as 22 were publishers of religious books and they were the single largest block at the fair. According to organizers, this block reaped the maximum benefit this year.'

As Milton has said, a good book is the precious life-blood of a master mind. To open oneself fully to the life-giving ideas of a great man his book must be read again and again, and for this it is necessary to own the book. Ruskin's statement, 'If a book is worth reading, it is worth buying', carries an imperative to all those who seek excellence in life. One of the important factors that has contributed to the phenomenal rise of Russia is the popularization of books. While Indian youths are nuts over films, dress and cosmetics, Russian youths regard reading of books a fashion. Soviet Union is the largest producer of books in the world, bringing out more than 85,000 titles every year—one-fifth of the world's total. A Russian buys on an average 13 books, whereas the average for India is much less than even one book per head. Poverty is not the only cause for this sad state. The main cause is lack of intellectual awakening, ignorance of the power of ideas, absence of love of knowledge. If we want to develop, we must popularize good books—and read and grow.

## ● विवेकानन्द साहित्य

कुल १० खंड, डबल डिमाई साइज में, अनुक्रमणिका समेत पृष्ठ संख्या प्रति खंड लगभग ४५० ; मजबूत और आकर्षक सजिल्द नव प्रकाशित द्वितीय संस्करण का मूल्य प्रति खंड १६ रु० सम्पूर्ण सेट १५० रु० । पूरा सेट एक साथ रेल द्वारा मंगाने से रेल-खर्च नहीं लगेगा । पुस्तक विक्रेताओं को विशेष कमीशन दिया जाता है ।

इन ग्रन्थों में स्वामीजी के दर्शन, धर्म, राष्ट्र, समाज आदि विषयक ओजपूर्ण व्याख्यानों तथा 'गम्भीर लेखों का पूर्ण संकलन है जो अंग्रेजी में प्रकाशित और अप्रकाशित उनकी सभी रचनाओं, पत्रों, कविताओं, व्याख्यानों, प्रवचनों तथा कथाओं का हिन्दी अनुवाद है । अनुवादकों में पं० सूर्यकान्त त्रिपाठी निराला, पं० सुमित्रानन्दन पंत, डा० प्रभाकर माचवे, श्री फणीश्वरनाथ 'रेणु', डा० बर्मदेश्वर प्रसाद आदि ख्यातिलब्ध साहित्यकारों के नाम उल्लेखनीय हैं ।



**अद्वैत आश्रम**

५ डिही इन्टाली रोड

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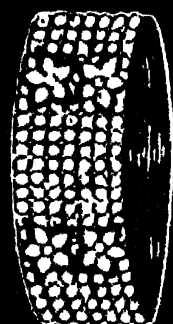
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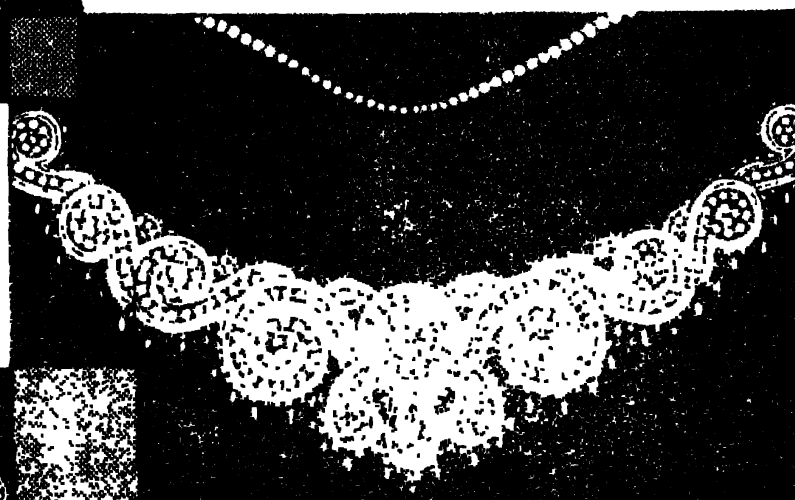
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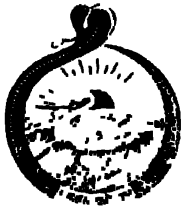
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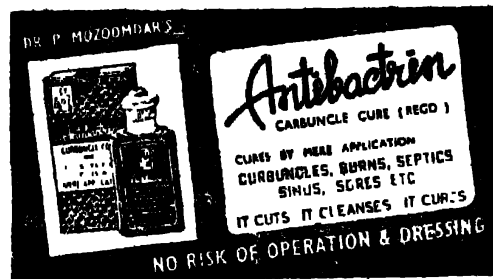
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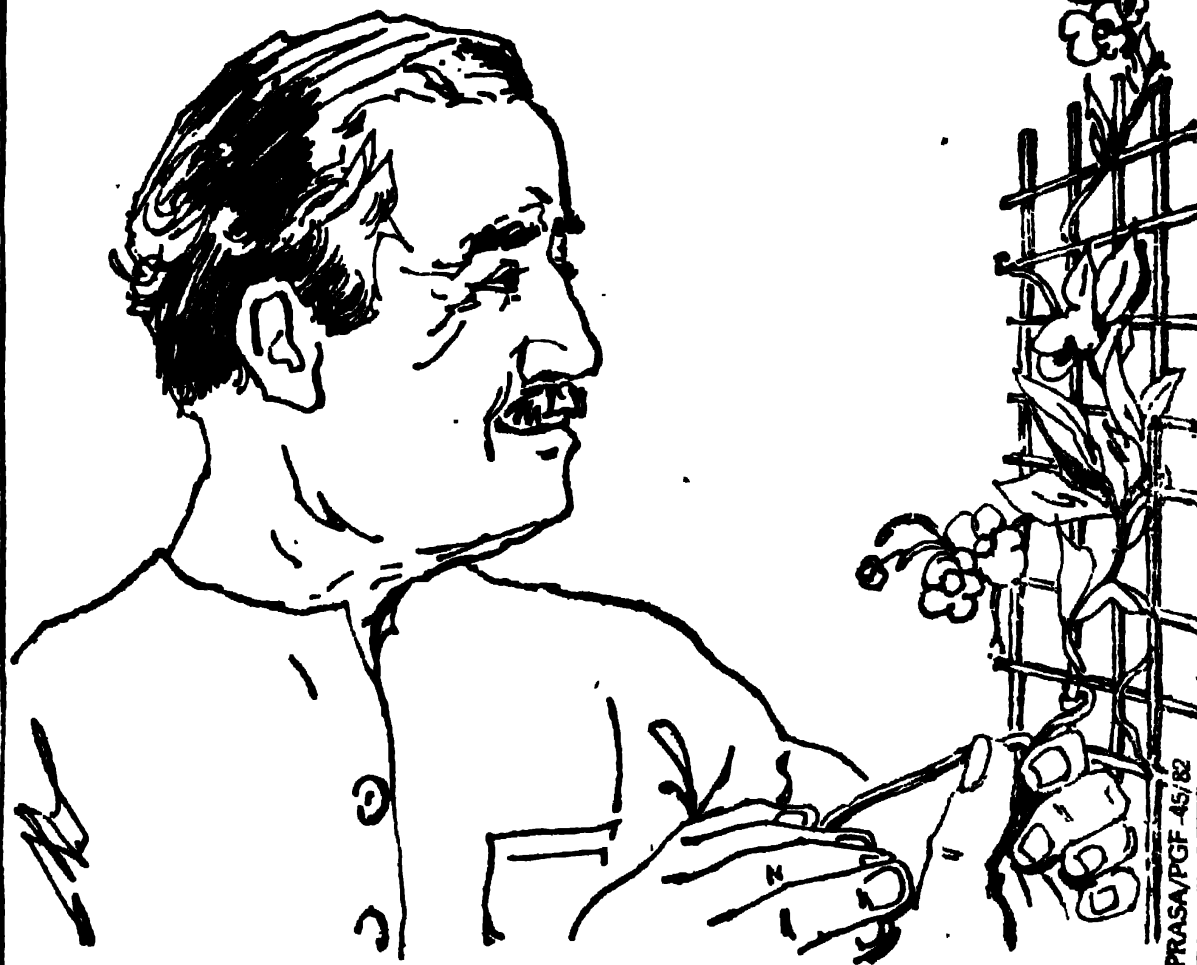
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# Prabuddha Bharata

VOL. 88

JULY 1983

No. 7

Arise ! Awake ! And stop not till the Goal is reached.

## INTEGRAL VISION OF VEDIC SEERS'

*'Truth is one : sages call It by various names'*

यत् पुरुष व्यदधु. कतिधा व्यकल्पयन् ।  
मुखं किमस्य कौ बाहू का ऊरू पादा उच्येते ॥

ब्राह्मणोऽस्य मुखमासीद् बाहू राजन्यः कृतः ।  
ऊरू तदस्य यद् वैश्यः पद्भ्यां शूद्रो अजायत ॥

चंद्रमा मनसो जातश्चक्षुः सूर्यो अजायत ।  
मुखादिन्द्रश्चाग्निश्च प्राणाद् वायुरजायत ॥

नाभ्या आसीदन्तरिक्षं शीर्ष्णो द्यौः समवर्तत ।  
पद्भ्यां भूमिर्दिशः श्रोत्रात्तथा लोका अकल्पयन् ॥

1. When the Virāt Puruṣa was offered as a sacrifice<sup>1</sup>, into how many parts did they divide him ?<sup>2</sup> What became of his mouth, what of his arms, what of his thighs ? What were his feet called ?

*Rg-Veda 10 90 11*

2 His mouth became the Brāhmaṇa his arms became the Kṣatriya, his thighs became the Vaiśya ; the Śūdra was born from his feet.<sup>3</sup>

*Rg-Veda 10 90.12*

3. The moon was born from his mind ; the sun was born from his eye ; Indra and Agni were born from his mouth, Vāyu from his breath.

*Rg-Veda 10 90 13.*

4. From his navel came the atmosphere, from his head the sky was produced, the earth from his feet, the quarters of space from his ear. Thus they fashioned the world.

*Rg-Veda 10 90 14*

1. by the devas who are, according to Sāyaṇa, manifestations of the Prāṇa-Śakti of the Primal Puruṣa.

2. According to Sāyaṇa, the Sacrifice was a mental one, and so the dividing of Puruṣa does not mean an actual cutting up but a form of mental classification.

3. In the whole of *Rg-Veda* the four castes are directly mentioned only in this stanza.

## ABOUT THIS NUMBER

Some salient aspects of sacrifice in the Vedic period are dealt with in this month's EDITORIAL.

In the first instalment of GIRISH CHANDRA GHOSH Swami Chetanananda, head of the Vedanta Society of St. Louis, gives a vibrant account of the early life of the great Bengali writer and actor Girish Chandra Ghosh.

In the second instalment of AESTHETICS IN RAMANUJA'S PHILOSOPHY Prof. S. S. Raghavachar, former head of the department of philosophy in Mysore University, discusses the secular and sacred aspects of art and the place of the theory of rasa in Viśiṣṭādvaita.

This month's Forum for Inter-religious Understanding presents an insightful paper on PRAYER IN A CHRISTIAN CONTEXT by Dr

Beatrice Bruteau who is the Director of Philosopher's Exchange, Winston-Salem and also lectures in the university. The central idea of this strikingly original thesis is that prayer is a two-way movement taking place in two stages, which the author calls 'insight' and 'manifestation' respectively. The first is a process of interiorization by which the soul draws nearer to God; the second manifests the divine light acquired by the soul in its own life and in loving service to others. Together, these two movements constitute the essence of Christian prayer.

Prof. Ranjit Kumar Acharjee of Ramakrishna Maha Vidyalaya, Kailashahat, North Tripura, has drawn an authentic profile of two of the less well-known founders of Bengal Vaisnavism in his article TWO VRNDAVANA GOSVAMINS.

## MEDITATION AND SACRIFICE—III

(EDITORIAL)

### *Yajña as the yoga of Vedic Age*

Spiritual life is conscious life. In fact, spiritual life is nothing but a struggle for higher consciousness, and this is what distinguishes it from ethical life and ordinary conventional religious life. The central process in spiritual life is the transformation of human consciousness. All spiritual disciplines, all yogas, are special techniques which transform the unconscious into the conscious and the conscious into the superconscious. This was what *yajña* did for the Vedic man. *Yajña* was the yoga of the Vedic Age. In the hands of unworthy people any spiritual endeavour may undergo degeneration. As yoga was misused

for the acquisition of occult powers, as the Tantras were misused for the enjoyment of sense pleasure, so too *yajña* was in later years degraded by ignorant people into a ritual for the attainment of heaven. But during the early Vedic period it served primarily as a spiritual discipline, a yoga, a technique for the transformation of consciousness.

In order to know how *yajña* brings about the transformation of consciousness we have to understand three principles on which it is based: ritualism, symbolism and the connection between thought and action.

Vedic *yajña* was centred on the external fire ritual performed every day in every

home. It was a simple rite of offering milk or ghee or cakes into an altar containing one or three or five fires. The whole life was regarded as a *yajña*, and the ritual was only meant to serve as an aid in the concentration of mental energies and in understanding the nature of the universe. The fire altar acted as a physical frame of reference for the working out of certain mental concepts. It was a kind of *maṇḍala* or *yantra*. In his autobiographical work the great psychoanalyst Dr. Jung mentions how he came to an understanding of *maṇḍalas*.<sup>1</sup> In his own personal life he used to visualize his mind as a circle and, whenever a conflict or tension arose, he would diagram it as a projection or distortion of the circle. In due course he found that this diagrammatization of his mental life had assumed a complex symmetric pattern which, as he later on discovered to his astonishment, had a striking resemblance to the Chinese and Tibetan *maṇḍalas*. A *maṇḍala* is thus an externalization of a person's intuitive understanding either about his own psyche or about the nature of the universe.<sup>2</sup> A *yantra* is a specific type of *maṇḍala* associated with a deity—a pattern of the deity's power-structure.

The Vedic altar was a three-dimensional *maṇḍala* or *yantra*. It was the external projection of a mental construct or paradigm of Reality, which the ṛṣi had developed through deep contemplation. The inner mental construct was called *vidyā* and the external physical construct was called *yajña* (In later upanishadic literature *yajña* came to be designated *avidyā*<sup>3</sup>). The ex-

ternal ritual was only an acting out and reinforcement of the inner meditation. By externalizing our inner thoughts we can study and control our mental life and our relationship with the world around us more easily. The fire altar served the same purpose to the Vedic ṛṣi—it enabled him to anchor his life in the real world, to concentrate his mind and energies, and to orientate himself to life and reality. Above all, it served to remind him of the unity and dynamism of life—that all life is one, that the entire universe is alive as one organism throbbing with divinity, that life is a constantly self-renewing steady-state system which every living being has to maintain through constant giving up and self-sacrifice.

In fact, the Vedic altar was the concretization of Vedic meditation. The real power lay in meditation, not in the external ritual—in the mind of the ṛṣi, not in the altar.

The second principle connected with *yajña* is symbolism. The most widely used symbols of the Vedic period are Sūrya (Sun) and Agni (Fire). In understanding the relation between these two and their symbolism lies the key to understanding the spiritual meaning of the entire Vedas. There are several passages in the *R̥g-Veda* which describe Agni as a power residing in all human beings. It is referred to as Vaiśvānara ('belonging to all men') and Jātavedas ('all-knowing'). It is said to be located in the heart where the seer offers his hymn as an oblation to Agni.<sup>4</sup> Seated in the heart, Agni inspires mystic mantras<sup>5</sup>. Agni is the 'one ocean, the

1. Carl G Jung. *Memories, Dreams, Reflection* (London: Collins and Routledge and Kegan Paul, 1963).

2. When a schoolboy draws a triangle in order to study the Pythagorean Theorem, he is making a most elementary form of *maṇḍala*.

3. Here *a-vidyā* does not mean 'ignorance' but 'not-*vidyā*', that is, something *different from* meditation.

4. आ ते अग्न ऋचा हविर्हृदा तष्टं भ्रामसि ।

*R̥g-Veda* 6.16.47

5. विदन्तीमन्न नरो घियंघा हृदा यत् तष्टान्

मन्त्राँ अशंसन् ।

*R̥g-Veda* 1.67.2.

source of riches, shines forth from our hearts<sup>6</sup>. These passages clearly indicate that in the Vedas Agni means not the external fire, but the power of intuition and will in man. It is the symbol of the power of the *Jīvātman*, the individual Self, which the Tantras call *kundalini*.

The Sun, *Sūrya*, is the symbol of spiritual illumination, the supreme Reality, the Cosmic Self,<sup>7</sup> the Primordial Puruṣa, the Hiraṇyagarbha, the Prajāpati, the Lord of all beings. Agni is the revealer, the means; *Sūrya* is the revealed, the goal. When Agni is called the 'priest, the divine sacrificer'<sup>8</sup> or the 'primary mouth of gods'<sup>9</sup>, and when the vedic sage prays to him for guidance along the right path<sup>10</sup>, what is implied is that the inner Self is the connecting link between man and God. Agni is only a special manifestation of *Sūrya*, and in the *Śatapatha-Bṛāhmaṇa* the two are identified. It is this identity that the Upanisads explicitly state as the identity of the individual Self and the Supreme Self.

Religious symbols are not mere signs but are the *samskāras*, dynamic impressions, of divine Reality produced in the minds of illumined sages. Just as the light of the sun produces the rainbow in the pure white cloud, so the light of the Divine gives rise to symbols in the purified minds of rsis. When reactivated, these symbols produce

great changes in the mind and recreate the original experience of the ṛṣi—just as the seven colours of the rainbow can be reconstituted back into the pure white radiance of the sun. The purpose of both meditation and ritual is to reactivate the archetypal symbols. This was what *yajña* did for the Vedic man.

The third point in understanding the spiritual significance of *yajña* is the connection between meditation and work. How do thoughts influence action, and how do actions influence thoughts? What is the connecting link between consciousness and activity? This is an important question for a spiritual aspirant, for without finding an answer to it he cannot resolve the conflict between meditation and karma yoga.<sup>11</sup> But for this it is necessary to study in detail the fundamental psychological processes which interlink thought and action. This is beyond the scope of the present discussion but, considering its importance, will be dealt with in a subsequent editorial.

#### *How yajña evolved into upāsana (meditation)*

Few people are aware of the fact that Vedantic meditation known as *upāsana* evolved out of the Vedic *yajña*. During the early Vedic period the two constituted one single discipline, *yajñopāsana*. Gradually *upāsana* became *angāvabaddha*, that is, distinct from but dependent on the external sacrifice. By the time the *Bṛāhmaṇa* and *Āraṇyaka* portions of the Vedas were composed, the external rite had been internalized and meditation had become a mental sacrifice, *mānasa-yajña*. During the period of the Upanisads *upāsana* became a completely independent discipline using its own symbols and

6. एकः समुद्रो धरुणो रयीणामस्मद् हृदो

भूरिजन्मा विचष्टे ।

*Rg-Veda* 10.5.1

7. सूर्य आत्मा जगतस्तस्थुषश्च ।

*Rg-Veda* 1.115.1

8. अग्निमीळे पुरोहितं यज्ञस्य देवमृत्विजं ।

*Rg-Veda* 1.1.1.

9. अग्निर्मुखं प्रथमो देवतानां ।

*Āitareya-Bṛāhmaṇa* 1.4.8

10. अग्ने नय सुपथा राये ।

*Rg-Veda* 1.189.1; *Isāvāsya-Upaniṣad* 18.

11. This is one of the basic conflicts of Arjuna in the Gita.

techniques. This transformation of *yajña* into *upāsana* had a profound effect on the development of religious life in India, and some of the great philosophical concepts regarding the nature of Reality came out of it.

The earliest form of *yajña* was the offering of milk or ghee into a single domestic fire every day. This in due course developed into the cult of the *treta*, the three fires, called *daksina*, *āhavanīya* and *gārhapatya*. Oblations for one's forefathers were offered in the first fire and oblations for the gods in the second fire. These oblations were supposed to lead the soul to the path of manes (*pitryāna*) and the path of gods (*devayāna*) respectively. The third fire was meant to receive oblations without any motive. It symbolized the earliest form of Karma Yoga or selfless work, and gave rise to the concept of *mukti*, liberation from transmigratory existence as a direct path.

From the cult of the three fires developed several meditations. One was the *upakosala-vidyā* which led to identification of *prāṇa*, *kam* (bliss) and *kham* (space) with Brahman.<sup>12</sup> Another was the three-stage meditation taught by Uddālaka Āruṇi to his son Śvetaketu. In the first stage the origin of mind, *Prāṇa* and speech is traced to the three elements earth, water and fire; in the second stage these elements are traced to their common source, *sat* or pure being; in the third stage the individual soul is identified with *sat* through the famous equation *tat tvam asi*.<sup>13</sup> Meditations on the three fires also led to important discoveries like the doctrine of the three worlds (*bhūh*, *bhuvah*, *suvah*), the doctrines of the three states (waking, dream and deep sleep), the three parts of cognition (knower, knowledge and the object), etc. Mystic and

psychic truths and experiences, like those connected with the three channels of *idā*, *pingalā* and *suṣumnā*, also evolved out of the cult of the three fires.<sup>14</sup>

Later on two more fires—*āvasathya* and *sabhya*—were added to the three fires, and thus developed the cult of the Five Fires which became the standard form of fire-sacrifice (*agnihotra*) during the later Vedic period. From this fire cult developed several meditations and concepts. One of the most well known of these meditations is the *pañcāgnividyā* in which the heaven, the cloud, the earth, man and woman are regarded as five fires which represent the five stages through which the soul passes before it is reborn. Important psychological concepts like the five *kośas* or sheaths (the material, vital, mental, intellectual and blissful) of the soul, the five sense organs as powers of mind, the five vital airs and their control through *Prāṇāyāma* and other important principles of yoga are all products of the *pañcāgnividyā*.

The development of *upāsana*, which began as an internalization of the fire-sacrifice, continued in the post-Vedic period. Two important changes took place during this period. One was the introduction of the concept of self-surrender. The three parts of a Vedic sacrifice were the material things offered (*dravya*), the deity (*devatā*), and the act of giving (*tyāga*) which was mostly done as an obligatory duty.<sup>15</sup> In the *upāsana* of the post-Vedic period the Self (Atman) was substituted for *dravya*, and *tyāga* gave way to *samarpana* or surrender. As a result, *upāsana* became an act of self-surrender. Self-surrender developed into *bhajana*, loving service to the

14. It was perhaps some such mystic knowledge that the boy Naciketā sought as his second boon in the *Kathopanishad* 1.13-17.

15. द्रव्यं देवता त्यागः ।

*Kūṭyāyana Śrauta Sūtra* 1.2.12,

12. Cf. *Chāndogya-Upaniṣad* 4.10.4

13. Cf. *Chāndogya-Upaniṣad* 6.5.4 — 6.8.8,

Lord, in the Bhakti movement of the Middle Ages.<sup>16</sup> The next significant change took place several hundred years later in modern times when Swami Vivekananda gave a new turn to Hindu religious life by linking individual spiritual practice to service (*sevana*) of humanity. The transformation of *yajana* (*yajña*) into *bhajana* and of the latter into *sevana* has had its parallel effect in the form and content of *upāsana*.

In the meantime, under the influence of Patañjali's Yoga, *upāsana* was undergoing a second type of change to which we now turn for a detailed study.

### *Difference between Vedic meditation and post-Vedic meditation*

When we study meditation in the Vedas<sup>17</sup> we find that it differs from the prevalent notions regarding meditation in three ways.

1. *Emphasis on awakening of intuition rather than on suppression of thoughts.* Every thought has behind it two powers: the power to convey meaning known in the Vedas as *vāk*, and the power of will known in the Vedas as *kratu*. Both these powers have their source in the *dhī* (or higher *buddhī*), the intuitive faculty located in the heart.<sup>18</sup> When *dhī* is awakened, thoughts acquire great power and luminosity

and reveal subtle or hidden truths. The Vedic seers knew this, and so everywhere in the Vedas we find prayers for the awakening of the *dhī* (like the celebrated Gāyatrī) and for the union of thoughts to *dhī*. This was what yoga meant to the Vedic ṛṣi—the 'yoking' of thoughts to *dhī* and the deployment of thoughts to understand the true nature of life and reality.<sup>19</sup>

In striking contrast, the emphasis in Patañjali's Yoga is on the control or suppression of thoughts, *citta-vṛtti nirodhaḥ*. Of course, yogic control is a fully conscious self-directed process, but for this some prior awakening, gained through intense prayer or self-analysis or Karma Yoga, is necessary. When suppression of thoughts is attempted with an unawakened impure mind in a mechanical way, it becomes what psychologists call 'repression', and much mental energy is wasted. People try to suppress thoughts because of the mistaken notion that all thoughts are evil and are obstacles to spiritual realization. Thoughts cause distraction, conflict and suffering only when they are left to the mercies of lower impulses without the light and guidance of an awakened *dhī*. When *dhī* awakens, it takes charge of the whole mental life, frees thoughts from the hold of instincts, brings them under its control, and endows them with power and luminosity. Instead of straining every nerve in the futile attempt to suppress thoughts, if spiritual aspirants spent at least a fraction of their time and energy in awakening the *dhī* first through intense prayer and selfless karma yoga, meditative life would not appear so difficult and frustrating as it does to many of them.

16. Derived from the root *bhaj*—to divide share, serve, the original use of the word *bhajana* in the *Rg-Veda* is not much different from that of *yajña* cf. महस्ते विष्णो मुमर्ति भजामहे ।

*Rg-Veda* 1.156.3

17. For an insightful study of Vedic meditation see, Jeanne Miller, *The Vedas* (London: Rider and Company; also, New Delhi: B.I. Publications, 1974).

18. Cf. 'Varuṇa has implanted *kratu* in the heart'.

हस्सु ऋतु वरुणो . . . अदधात् ।

*Rg-Veda* 5.85.2.

19. Cf. 'Seers, who have known the Great Seer, unite their minds to *dhī*'.

युजते मन उत युजते धियो विप्रा

विप्रस्य बृहतो विपश्चितः ।

*Rg-Veda* 5.81.1.

2. *Integration of personality.* One of the most obvious characteristics of post-Vedic spirituality is the compartmentalization of spiritual endeavour into Jñāna, Bhakti, Yoga and Karma each of which gives importance to the cultivation of one of the three faculties of reason, feeling and will. Following only one path neglecting the others leads to a lop-sided development of personality. On the contrary, spiritual life in the Vedic period was holistic which allowed the full development of all the faculties. There was no division of it into Jñāna, Bhakti, etc., for an individual's entire life was an undivided consecration and sacrifice to the Divine.

3. *Openness to Reality at all levels.* The goal of Vedic man's life was the attainment of harmony with *ṛtam*, the cosmic order. Life was treated as an integral whole without any distinction between the sacred and the secular, the individual and the cosmic, the inner and the outer. Man encountered the Divine at all times everywhere, and every activity was a sacrifice to the Divine. The purpose of meditation was to establish as many points of contact with the divine Reality as possible. Through meditation the Vedic man learnt how to open up every part of his personality—the physical, vital, mental and the superconscious—to the light and power of the Divine. Meditation was essentially a technique for the expansion of consciousness and for the experience of divine joy at all levels. It was not an exclusive activity but an integral part of the everyday life of the common man.

This openness to experience, expansion of consciousness and multidimensional contact with Reality which characterized Vedic meditation was lost during the post-Vedic period. Meditation got progressively divorced from everyday life, and became a specialized activity needing withdrawal from practical life, chiefly meant for ascetics and monks.

With the advancement of science and technology the human situation has been rapidly changing in modern times. On the one hand, the discoveries of science and psychology have opened up hitherto unknown dimensions of Reality and, on the other hand, industrialization, wars and socio-political changes have created problems of disbelief, discontentment, alienation, insecurity and meaninglessness. There is an enormous increase in man's access to nature's power but there is a corresponding decrease in man's ability to face himself and solve his problems. What the world now needs is an integral view of the universe and multidimensional experience of Reality. It is this need that is prompting thousands of people in the East and West to practise meditation. If meditation is to fulfil this need, it should be freed from its narrow doctrinal framework and ascetic shell and integrated into the life of the common man in every walk of life. The best way to do this is to revive and re-establish the Vedic principle of meditation. And the Vedic principle of meditation, we have seen, is inseparable from the principle of *yajña*, sacrifice.

(To be concluded)



## GIRISH CHANDRA GHOSH

SWAMI CHETANANANDA

It is often very difficult for people to understand the actions and behaviour of the great teachers of the world. People judge these great ones according to their own mental make-up and sometimes criticize them without understanding the motive behind their actions. The life story of Buddha tells how the rulers of *Vaisali* were disappointed when Buddha accepted a dinner invitation from the courtesan Ambapali and refused theirs. Jesus' disciples were surprised when they found their Master talking with the socially scorned Samaritan woman near Jacob's well; and again, Simon could not understand why Jesus would let a fallen woman anoint his feet. Similarly, the charge was levelled against Sri Ramakrishna that he did not show 'sufficient moral abhorrence' toward prostitutes and drunkards. On the contrary, we find that one of the marked characteristics of these great souls is that they love the virtuous and the sinner alike. In fact, just as a mother may show more affection to her handicapped child than to her healthy one, so the great teachers of the world are in some ways more sympathetic toward the wayward children of God than toward the virtuous ones. After all, what glory is there in making a good man good? Buddha, Christ, Sri Ramakrishna, and other God-men paid special attention to the fallen, the downtrodden, and the destitute, and by their redeeming power they lifted the lowly to the highest state. They transformed sinners into saints.

Girish Chandra Ghosh is just such an example of the transforming power of Sri

Ramakrishna. Before he met Sri Ramakrishna, Girish Ghosh had led a reckless, hedonistic life. He was a self-proclaimed libertine and a rebel against God. Yet he had a strong mind, and was a man of tremendous heart. The turn that Sri Ramakrishna gave to Girish's life is epitomized in a conversation that took place between them on December 14, 1884:

Ramakrishna. 'Have faith in the Divine Mother and you will attain everything.'

Girish: 'But I am a sinner.'

Ramakrishna. 'The wretch who constantly harps on sin becomes a sinner.'

Girish. 'Sir, the very ground where I used to sit would become unholy.'

Ramakrishna. 'How can you say that? Suppose a light is brought into a room that has been dark a thousand years, does it illumine the room little by little, or all in a flash?'

A little later Girish asked, 'Tell me what I should do.'

Ramakrishna: 'Give God your power of attorney. Let Him do whatever He likes.'

The life story of Girish is very interesting. It gives hope to the hopeless, faith to the faithless, and inspiration to the seekers of God. Girish was born of pious parents in Calcutta on February 28, 1844, and grew up a lively, carefree soul. He inherited from his father a sharp intellect and a pragmatic approach to life, and from his mother a love for literature and devotion for God. But it was his grandmother who introduced him to the rich heritage of India's epics and mythology. In the evenings she would recount to him some of those ancient stories, and he would listen with rapt attention. Once she was describ-

ing the episode of Kṛṣṇa's departure from Vrindaban, one of the moving scenes of the *Bhāgavatam*. Kṛṣṇa's uncle, Akrūra, was sent to bring Kṛṣṇa to Mathura, much to the despair of the shepherd boys and girls of Vrindaban. When Kṛṣṇa sat in the chariot, the boys began to cry, and they pleaded with him, 'O Kṛṣṇa, do not leave us!' The girls held the wheels of the chariot, and some of them grabbed the reins of the horses. But Akrūra would not pay any heed to them. He left Vrindaban with Kṛṣṇa, and thus the days of joy that Kṛṣṇa's playmates had known in his company came to an end. Girish was listening intently and, with tearful eyes, he asked his grandmother, 'Did Kṛṣṇa ever return to Vrindaban?' 'No', replied the grandmother. Girish asked the question three times and each time got the same answer. He then burst into tears and ran away. The story upset him so much that for the next several evenings he refused to listen to any more tales.

When he was only eleven years old his mother died. Although his father was very loving and indulgent toward Girish, he wanted the boy to learn to stand on his own feet and depend on none but God. Once Girish went with his father by boat to visit Navadvīp, the birthplace of Śrī Caitanya, which is several miles up the river Ganga from Calcutta. On the way their boat was suddenly caught in a crosscurrent. As it whirled around in imminent danger of sinking, Girish clung tightly to his father's hand. Luckily the boatman was able to navigate the boat to safety. When they reached the shore, Girish's father said to him: 'Why did you hold my hand? Don't you know that my life is dearer to me than yours? If the boat had started to sink, I would have snatched my hand from you and tried to save my own life. You would have been forsaken.' 'My father's cruel words

hurt me terribly, but I learned that there is no one but God to hold to at the time of danger.' Three years after his mother's death, Girish lost his father.

From his boyhood Girish was a voracious reader and a free thinker. With his father's permission, he enrolled in one school after another, yet he was not happy in any of them. He found the discipline confining, and their methods of teaching did not satisfy his thirst for knowledge. A year after his father's death he was married, and he then left school completely without matriculating. He never went to college.

Girish was born in a transitional period of Indian history when, in Calcutta particularly, Western education and culture were being thrust upon Indian society, challenging the traditional Indian culture and religions. Consequently, the youth of his generation grew up in an atmosphere of doubt, atheism, and cultural chaos. At the threshold of maturity, with little stability either in his family or in society to guide him, Girish started drifting into drunkenness, debauchery, waywardness, and obstinacy. He became the leader of a group of mischievous youths in his locality. Sometimes he would even desecrate images of Hindu gods and goddesses. Within a few years he became a neighbourhood menace. Yet side by side with his perverse behaviour, Girish would raise money to help the poor secure food and medicine, or arrange for the cremation of those in his community who had died. After studying homeopathic medicine, he was able to treat people himself.

Girish would often watch the people in the street through a small opening in his door. One afternoon, when the men of the neighbourhood were at work, he observed a hypocritical astrologer, in the guise of a monk, collecting information from a maidservant about the women of

the household where she worked. The man then entered that house as a fortune-teller, and the simple, curious women came to him to have their palms read. Girish could not tolerate it. He grabbed a branch of a flower tree in the courtyard, broke it off, and ran and attacked the astrologer. He did not stop chasing him until the astrologer was out of the locality.

Although Girish was no longer in school, he did not give up his studies. He eventually became a member of the Asiatic Society and other well-known libraries of Calcutta. His reading included the *Rāmāyaṇa*, the *Mahābhārata*, the *Purāṇas*, and Bengali literature. In this way he gradually became well versed in history, logic, philosophy, zoology, and English literature. He also studied science and medicine. He did not care for superficial knowledge. His capacity for deep penetration into any subject, plus his keen observation of human character and wonderful imagination, are what later made him a natural poet and playwright.

Once a friend of Girish's, who later became a judge of the Calcutta High Court, said to him, 'It is impossible to translate the conversations of the witches of Shakespeare's *Machbeth* into Bengali.' Immediately Girish decided to translate the whole play. It was his nature to rise to any challenge or to do just what he was told not to do. If anyone said, 'Don't go there. There is a ghost,' he would immediately run to that place to see the ghost. He was fearless, independent, and proud of his strength. No one could make him begin work or quit work through pressure or intimidation. He used to say, 'A beast can be tamed by the whip, but not a human being.' His attitude was: If I do not enjoy my work, why should I do it? What he considered right he did, without caring whether others criticized him or not.

Meanwhile, Girish's recklessness and debauchery continued. His father-in-law finally decided to introduce some kind of discipline into Girish's life and secured for him a job as a bookkeeper in his own office. It was while working there that Girish translated *Machbeth* into Bengali. Unfortunately, that manuscript was lost when the company went out of business, because Girish was then away from the office taking care of his sick wife. However, he later retranslated *Machbeth*, and it was staged at the Minerva Theatre in Calcutta. Girish worked in various capacities in different businesses during the next fifteen years. He had indomitable energy, and was becoming increasingly more involved in the theatre. Thus it was common practice for him to work all day at the office and then go to the theatre in the evening to act in a play, returning home at three or four o'clock in the morning.

That person is indeed unfortunate who loses his mother in childhood, his father in boyhood, and his wife in early manhood. In 1874, when Girish was just thirty, his young wife died, leaving him with one son and one daughter. Shortly thereafter he lost his job. A thick, dark cloud of despair seemed to hover over him. As God created grief to subdue man, so man created wine to subdue grief. Again Girish drifted, trying to forget his sorrows with the help of alcohol. But, at the same time, his pent-up emotions found an outlet in a series of exquisite poetical compositions.

During this period he went to Bhagalpur, in Central India, for a short while on some business. One day while he was there he went for a walk with some friends and in a boisterous mood, jumped into a deep ravine. When he tried to climb out he found he was unable to do so. His friends then attempted to rescue him but they also failed. One of them commented: 'Now we are in real trouble. You are an

atheist, and yet no one can save you now but God. Let us all pray together.' Girish found himself joining wholeheartedly in the prayer, and strangely, just then he found a way out of the ravine. After he was safe he said to his friends: 'Today I have called on God out of fear. If I ever call on Him again, it will be out of love, otherwise I will not call on Him, even at the cost of my life'

After returning to Calcutta Girish remarried and also found another job. His new supervisor was an Englishman who introduced the practice of summoning his employees by ringing a bell. One day he rang for Girish. Girish heard the bell but did not respond. The supervisor sent an attendant to ask Girish whether he had heard the bell or not. Girish simply replied, 'No, I didn't hear the bell,' and continued with his work. The supervisor became angry when he heard the report and went to Girish himself. 'I am calling you. Why don't you respond?' 'I did hear the bell', answered Girish. 'Even so, how am I to know that the bell is calling me? The bell never said, "Girish, Girish."' Then more seriously he said: 'Listen, sir. So far I have spoken to you as a gentleman; now I shall be frank. I am not your servant or bearer. I am not accustomed to standing and sitting according to a bell. I feel it is humiliating for a subordinate to be summoned by a bell. And when its employees are humiliated, a company loses its reputation.' The owner of the company came to know of the incident and supported Girish. Later the supervisor apologized to Girish, and they eventually became close friends.

Six months after his second marriage Girish became ill with a virulent type of cholera, and physicians gave up hope for his recovery. Girish was lying on his bed in a semi-conscious state, surrounded by weeping relatives, when he had a vision:

A resplendent female form, wearing a red-bordered cloth, appeared before him. Her face was full of compassion and love. She sat near him and, putting something in his mouth, said, 'Please eat this prasad [sanctified food] and you will be cured.' Girish slowly regained consciousness, and from that moment his recovery began. He later recounted this mysterious vision to his brother disciples and added, 'Sixteen years later (in 1891) when I first went to Jayrambati to see the Holy Mother, I found to my surprise and delight that the woman who had saved my life with the holy prasad was none other than the Holy Mother herself'

Disease, the death of a loved one, an accident, or untold suffering invariably leads to a turning point in one's life. Girish was experiencing all of these and, in spite of his proclaimed atheism, he began to wonder if in fact a greater Reality did exist. He wrote in his memoirs:

At such a crisis I thought, 'Does God exist? Does he listen to the prayers of man? Does he show him the way from darkness to light?' My mind said, 'Yes' Immediately I closed my eyes and prayed, 'Oh God, if thou art, carry me across. Give me refuge. I have none.' I remembered the words of the Gita, 'Those who call on Me alone in the days of affliction, to them too I bring succour and refuge' These words sank deep in my consciousness and gave me solace in sorrow. I found the words of the Gita to be true. As the sun removes the darkness of the night, so the sun of hope arose and dispelled the gloom that had gathered thick in my mind. In the sea of trouble I found the harbour of repose. But I had nurtured doubt all these years. I had argued long, saying, 'There is no God' Where would the impressions of these thoughts go? I began to reason in terms of cause and effect and argued that such and such a cause had produced such and such an effect, which was instrumental in bringing release from this danger. It is said that doubt dies hard. Again I fell victim to doubt. But I had not the courage to say boldly, 'God does not exist.'

Desire for inquiry came. Looking into the current of events, sometimes faith, sometimes doubt, emerged. Everybody with whom I discussed my problem said unanimously that without instruction from a guru doubt would not go and nothing could be achieved in spiritual life. But my intellect refused to accept a human being as a guru; for one has to salute the guru with the words, 'Guru is Brahma, Guru is Viṣṇu, Guru is the Lord Mahesvaia (Śiva), the god of gods, etc.' How could I say this to a man who is like me? This was hypocrisy. But the tyranny of doubt was intolerable. Terrible conflicts pierced my heart through and through. That condition can better be imagined than described. Suppose a man, all of a sudden is forcibly dragged to a dark, solitary room with his eyes covered, and kept confined there with no food and drink. What will be the state of his mind? If you can picture his mental condition, you will be able to understand something of my own. There were moments when I was breathless with emotion. Thoughts of despair bit through me like a saw. At other times the memory of the past was revived and the darkness of my heart knew no bounds.

Girish had read about Śrī Ramakrishna in the *Indian Mirror*. He also came to know how the famous Keshab Chandra Sen and his followers, of the Brahmo Samaj, had been influenced by Śrī Ramakrishna. He then became curious to know more about this holy man of Dakshineswar. Most probably Girish first saw Śrī Ramakrishna in 1877 at Dinanath Basu's house in Calcutta. In his reminiscences Girish recorded his first several meetings with Śrī Ramakrishna. As he described his first meeting:

It was dusk. Lights were lit and they were placed in front of Śrī Ramakrishna. But he began to make repeated inquiries, saying, 'Is it evening? Is it evening?' At this I thought to myself, 'What pretension! It is dusk. Lights are burning in front of him. Yet he cannot tell whether it is evening or not.' Thinking I had seen enough of him, I came away.

A few years later, Girish saw Śrī Ramakrishna for the second time at the

home of Balaram Bose. Many people had been invited that day to meet the Master. A dancing girl named Bidhu was seated next to Śrī Ramakrishna in order to sing a few devotional songs for him. Girish observed Śrī Ramakrishna talking to people and receiving them with the utmost humility, bowing down to the ground. Girish wrote in his reminiscences:

An old friend of mine, pointing at him, said sarcastically, 'Bidhu must have had a previous intimacy with him. That's why he is laughing and joking with her.' But I did not like his insinuations. Just at this time Sisir Kumar Ghosh, the well-known editor of *Amrita Bazar Patrika* arrived. He seemed to have very little respect for Śrī Ramakrishna. He said, 'Let us go, enough of him!' I wanted to stay and see a little more. But he insisted and made me go with him.

In August, 1884, Girish's drama on the life of Śrī Caitanya was creating a sensation in Calcutta. Śrī Ramakrishna heard about the play and wanted to see it, but some devotees objected because several of the roles were played by women of bad reputation. In those days girls from good families did not become actresses in the theatre. Śrī Ramakrishna told the devotees: 'I shall look upon them as the Blissful Mother herself. What if one of them acts the part of Caitanya? An imitation custard apple reminds one of the real fruit.'

Girish wrote in his memoirs for September 21, 1884:

My play, *The Life of Caitanya*, was being enacted in the Star Theatre. I was strolling in the outer compound of the theatre when Mahendra Nath Mukhopadhyaya, one of the devotees of Śrī Ramakrishna, came and said to me, 'Śrī Ramakrishna has come to see the play. If you will give him a free pass, well and good. Otherwise we will buy a ticket for him.'

I replied, 'He will not have to purchase his ticket. But the others will have to.' Saying this, I proceeded to greet him. I found him alighting from the carriage and entering the

compound of the theatre. I wanted to salute him. But before I could do so, he saluted me. I returned his salute. He saluted me again. I bowed my head and he did the same to me. I thought this might continue forever, so I greeted him mentally and led him upstairs and offered him a seat in the box. After arranging with an attendant to fan him, I returned home, feeling indisposed.

This was Girish's third meeting. After the performance a devotee asked Sri Ramakrishna how he had enjoyed the play. He replied with a smile, 'I found the representation the same as the real.' On this occasion, he blessed the actress Binodini, who had played the role of Sri Caitanya, by touching her head and saying, 'Be illumined.' Binodini wrote in her autobiography: 'I don't care if people of the world look down upon my sinful life. I was blessed by Sri Ramakrishna. His loving, hopeful message still sustains me. When I am terribly depressed I see his sweet, compassionate face in my heart and hear his voice, "Say Hari guru, guru Hari (God is your guru, and the guru is your God)."'

People came from all over Bengal to honour Girish for his excellent presentation of Caitanya's life. Even orthodox Vaisnavas (followers of Caitanya) went to see the play in the theatre—a remarkable fact since the theatre was traditionally regarded as an immoral place. Some of them went to Girish's house to meet him personally. Girish, having performed until late the previous night, was not very enthusiastic about receiving effusive visitors during the day, and he was also tired of flattery. Finally he struck upon a plan to get rid of the crowd. Filling his glass from a bottle, he began to drink. The devout Vaisnavas then asked, 'Sir, are you sick? Are you taking medicine?' Girish replied, 'No, it is not medicine. I am drinking wine.' Finding that his life and the ideal expressed in his play were poles apart, the visitors

left. Girish smiled to himself and thought: 'I am Girish Ghosh. I am not afraid or ashamed of anything. Why should I care for other's opinions?'

When on the fourth occasion he saw Sri Ramakrishna, Girish felt for the first time the wonderful divine attraction that drew the devotees to the Master. In his own words:

I was sitting on the porch of a friend's house, which was at the crossroads, when I saw Sri Ramakrishna slowly approaching, accompanied by Narayana and a couple of other devotees. No sooner had I turned my eyes toward him than he saluted me. I returned his salute. Then he went on. For no accountable reason my heart felt drawn toward him by an invisible string. As soon as he had gone a short distance, I felt an urge to follow him. I could not keep calm, for the attraction I felt was not of this earth, it was something for which no former experience had ever prepared me. It was something unique which no words could describe. Just at that moment a person, whose name I do not recall, brought me a message from him and said, 'Sri Ramakrishna is calling you'. I went

Sri Ramakrishna was on his way to Balaram Bose's house, and Girish followed him there. His account continues:

After an exchange of a few words with Balaram, Sri Ramakrishna suddenly exclaimed, 'I am all right. I am all right.' So saying, he went into a state of consciousness which seemed very strange to me. Then he remarked, 'No, no, this is not pretence. This is not pretence.' He remained in this state for a while and then resumed his normal state. I asked him, 'What is a guru?' He answered, 'Do you know what the guru is? He is like a matchmaker. A matchmaker arranges for the union of the bride with the bridegroom. Likewise, a guru prepares for the meeting of the individual soul with his Beloved, the Divine Spirit.' Then he said, 'You need not worry. Your guru has already been chosen.' I asked, 'What is a mantra?' He replied, 'The name of God.'

Still describing the same meeting, Girish wrote;

Then the talk drifted to the theatre, and he said, 'I liked your play very much. The sun of knowledge has begun to shine upon you. All the blemishes of your heart will be washed away. Very soon devotion will arise to sweeten your life with profuse joy and peace.' I told him that I had none of those qualities and that I had written the play only with the idea of making some money. He kept quiet. Then he said, 'Will you take me to your theatre and show me another play of yours?' I replied, 'Very well. Any day you like.' He said, 'You must charge me something.' I said, 'All right, you may pay eight annas.' Sri Ramakrishna said, 'That will allow me a seat in the balcony, which is a very noisy place.' I answered, 'Oh no, you will not go there. You will sit in the same place where you sat last time.' He said, 'Then you must take one rupee.' I said, 'All right, as you please.' Our talk ended.

Girish was a proud man, very much opposed to the idea of bowing down to anyone. But through the influence of Sri Ramakrishna, his haughtiness, rudeness, and pride gradually began to melt. Girish described his thoughts at his fifth meeting:

I was sitting in the dressing room of the theatre when a devotee came to me in a hurry and said with some concern, 'Sri Ramakrishna is here in his carriage.' I replied, 'Very well. Take him to a box and offer him a seat.' But the devotee answered, 'Won't you come and greet him personally and take him there yourself?' With some annoyance I said, 'Does he need me? Can't he get there himself?' Nevertheless, I went. I found him alighting from the carriage. Seeing his serene and radiant face, my stony heart melted. I rebuked myself in shame, and that shame still haunts my memory. To think that I had refused to greet this sweet and gentle soul! Then I conducted him upstairs. There I saluted him, touching his feet. Even now I do not understand the reason, but at that moment a radical change came over me and I was a different man. I offered him a rose, which he accepted. But he returned it again, saying, 'only a god or a dandy is entitled to flowers. What shall I do with it?'

Girish took Sri Ramakrishna and some of his devotees into the hall of the Star

Theatre, where the following conversation took place:

Ramakrishna: 'Ah! You have written nice plays.'

Girish: 'But, sir, how little I assimilate! I just write.'

Ramakrishna: 'No, you assimilate a great deal. The other day I said to you that no one could sketch a divine character unless he had love of God in his heart.'

Girish: 'I often ask myself, "Why bother about the theatre any more?"'

Ramakrishna: 'No, no! Let things be as they are. People will learn much from your plays.'

After the drama, which was on the life of the great devotee Prahlada, Girish asked Sri Ramakrishna, 'How did you like the performance?' Sri Ramakrishna replied: 'I found that it was God himself who was acting the different parts. Those who played the female parts seemed to me the direct embodiments of the Blissful Mother.'

On this occasion Sri Ramakrishna said to Girish, 'There is some crookedness in your heart.' Girish thought to himself, 'Yes, indeed. Plenty of it—of various kinds.' Then he asked the Master, 'How shall I get rid of it?' Sri Ramakrishna replied, 'Have faith.'

One afternoon Girish went to the theatre and found a note saying that Sri Ramakrishna would be visiting Ram Chandra Dutta's house in Calcutta that day. Girish suddenly felt an irresistible desire to see the Master. He left the theatre for Ram Dutta's house, even though he did not know him and had not received a formal invitation. He later wrote in his memoirs:

It was evening. Sri Ramakrishna was dancing in ecstasy in the courtyard. There was singing accompanied by a drum. The devotees were dancing in a circle around Sri Ramakrishna. The words of the song were, 'Nadia is shaken by the surging waves of divine love emanating from the heart of Gauranga.' The courtyard seemed a sea of bliss. He was absorbed in

samadhi. The devotees began to take the dust of his feet. I wanted to do the same but I could not, as I was shy. I was thinking of what others might say if I went to Sri Ramakrishna and took the dust of his feet. No sooner had this thought crossed my mind than Sri Ramakrishna, coming down from samadhi, began dancing again. While dancing he came in front of me and stood still, once more absorbed in samadhi. Now there was no longer any hesitation on my part to touch his feet. I took the dust of his feet.

After the music Sri Ramakrishna came and sat in the drawing room. I followed him. Then he began to talk to me. I asked him 'Will the crookedness go out of my heart?' He said, 'Yes, it will go.' Again I asked him the same question, and he gave the same reply. I repeated it once more, and he said the same thing.

A great change was coming over Girish. He felt as if Sri Ramakrishna was his own close relative. The Master's loving care and concern made Girish understand that he would not condemn him for his shortcomings. Girish wrote :

I went to Dakshineswar. I found Sri Ramakrishna seated on the southern porch of his room. He was talking with a young devotee named Bhavanath. I prostrated myself before Sri Ramakrishna and mentally recited the verse 'Guru is Brahma, Guru is Vishnu, Guru is the Lord Mahesvara, the god of gods.' He said, 'I was just talking about you. And if you don't believe me ask Bhavanath!'

After a while he started to give me some spiritual advice. I stopped him, saying: 'I won't listen to any advice. I have written cartloads of it myself. It doesn't help. Do something that will transform my life.' Hearing these words, Sri Ramakrishna was highly pleased. Ramlal, his nephew, was present. Sri Ramakrishna asked him to recite a particular hymn, which ran thus: 'Go into solitude and shut yourself in a cave. Peace is not there. Peace is where faith is, for faith is the root of all.' I saw a smile playing on the lips of Sri Ramakrishna, and I felt at that moment that I was freed from all impurities. And at that moment, my arrogant head bowed low at his feet. In him I found my sanctuary and all my fear was gone. I prostrated myself before him and was about to return home. He followed me as far as the northern porch. There I asked him, 'Now that I have received your grace, am I to continue the same kind of work that I have been doing?' Sri Ramakrishna replied, 'Yes, why not?' From his words I understood that my connection with the theatre would not hurt my spiritual life.

My heart was filled with joy. I felt as if I was born anew. I was a totally changed man. There was no more doubt or conflict in my mind. 'God is real. God is my sanctuary; I have found my refuge in this God-man. Now I can easily realize God.' Thoughts like these cast their spell on me night and day. In waking or in dreaming, the same mood persisted. 'Fearless am I! I have found my very own. The world can no longer bind me, for even the greatest fear, the fear of death, is gone.'

*(To be continued)*

## AESTHETICS IN RAMANUJA'S PHILOSOPHY

PROF S. S. RAGHAVACHAR

*(Continued from the previous issue)*

(d) *Expressionism*. A view of beauty ancient in origin, but formulated as a theory in recent times, is that it consists 'expression'. On this view, it is not a self-existent principle of aesthetic value, but is what it is by virtue of the revelation or expression of an inner or spiritual content.

The view accords well with the nature of the kingdom of arts. What is to be expressed is an inner vision and, in the process of expression, it acquires self-definition. The expression, we have seen, must fulfil itself in capturing the highest form or reality, of which the focal point of significance is



the Supreme Being. In all moods of their highest expressiveness, the artists of real creative genius confess to their being the passive vehicles of an inspiration, descending, as it were, from above, and appropriating them as its instruments of self-articulation. All great art takes shape, not as something man-made and artificial, but as the veritable self-utterance of the Highest Reality. The artist has the blessed status of an instrument, through whom Reality communicates itself. Thus, art at its best is Nature's own self-expression at its best. Vedānta Deśika, in one of his peak confessions, owns to being a mere *viṇū* on which the Lord (Venkateśa) is playing with delight. This passivity is a state of exaltation to the poet.

While thus art passes out of the realm of the work of man to that of God Himself, natural beauty, to which also the theory of Beauty as Expression has to apply, takes on the aspect of artistic creation. It is not something 'out there' by itself, solidly self-existing, but something projected and set up by the Creator's self-display. Parāśara Bhaṭṭa uses the self-display of a peacock as a simile. It is not unusual to speak of the Creator as a poet, dancer and musician, and Vedic literature uses the carpenter's analogy also. Creation as the art of the Divine Spirit is a valid picture on many counts. Vedānta Deśika, in a memorable poem, speaks of the Creator as a painter, He Himself constituting the canvas, with His creative joy as brush and compassion as the paint. Instead of merely art being expression, beauty in all forms and levels, produced or discovered by man, comes, in the last analysis, to be viewed as the self-expression of Divinity.

Thus Realism, Formalism and Expressionism, properly stretched to their ultimate height of significance, converge towards a *Brahman-centred* aesthetics.

(e) The problem of ugliness is a seemingly intractable one in aesthetics, as is that

of error in epistemology, and that of evil, moral and physical, in theism in general. It is a specific instance of the problem of imperfection, which is no problem for a materialistic or illusionistic metaphysics. The frame-work for treating it may be roughly indicated. Ultimately, imperfection is incidental to finite life; neither Nature nor the Supreme Spirit can be the basis of it for an unclouded vision. *Apurusārtha* can happen to a *jīva*. Objective Nature can have no ugliness in itself, except in a misreading of its nature by a finite mind. The misreading must be in the nature of an arrested vision, wherein there is obscuration of Nature being the embodiment of the Divine. Nature's supreme integration by the immanent Divine presence must be missed, and that it is a self-revelation of the Primal Artist must stand provisionally annulled. Such an arrested, fragmented and partially annulled perception on the part of the finite percipient, creates the impression of objective and ontological ugliness, whose locus in reality is the percipient himself. It is a malady incidental to his finitude. With his development of God-awareness, the possibility of the perception of natural ugliness must get transcended. The proneness to ugliness is much more conspicuous in the realm of art, wherein the finite soul expresses itself. It may be egoistic, subject to the opaqueness of *tamas* and misdirection of *rajas*, and may put forth forms of aesthetic creation embodying finite meanings, depleted of all transcendent reference. Art, with no intimation of the *Paramātmā* in what it depicts, would be genuine ugliness. Just as the essence of evil is the life of God-negation, and of error the apprehension of the finite divorced from the sustaining presence of God in it, even so artistic creation untouched by the Infinite is aesthetic frustration and ugliness. Sudarśana Sūri and Vedānta Deśika assert that in the liberated perception of the emancipated, evil, ugliness and all such antecedent imperfections stand

transmuted into integral elements of ecstasy.<sup>1</sup>

There is no such thing as 'invincible', objective ugliness, and all forms of ugliness are man's own making by virtue of his *jñāna-saṅkoca*. Redemption from this proneness and predicament is an assured possibility.

(f) Modern aesthetics in recent centuries makes a distinction between the beautiful and the sublime, and all reputed writers on the subject dwell on the theme. Bosanquet suggests an alternative pair of terms for the two classes of aesthetic excellence, 'easy' and 'difficult' beauty. Easy beauty is what can please aesthetically, without requiring much strain and effort on the part of the spectator, and is formed of simple forms of aesthetical quality. Difficult beauty or the sublime calls up all the mental resources of the spectator and presents spectacles of great width, intricacy and tension, producing awe as well as amazed admiration. There is no doubt that some kind of synthesis requires to be attempted, and aestheticians are not wanting who have put forth the attempt without minimizing the value of the distinction. The sublime can pass imperceptibly into what Rudolph Otto names the 'numinous', evoking fascination as well as awe. The 'numinous' is the unique category of the religious consciousness according to Otto. It is interesting to note that he considers the eleventh chapter of the *Gītā* as a magnificent presentation of the 'numinous', with all the terrors of mysterious majesty and also the basic element of attraction. In one of the Rāmānujite definitions of *bhakti*, we have a combination of both. It reads, *Mahanīyavisaye prītiḥ*, love directed to what is grand. The point is that the distinction between the two aesthetic qualities of beauty and sublimity is not

absolute, and they can be seen in fusion in the highest mystic experience. In the Viśiṣṭādvaitic idea of the Supreme Being, there is a combination of the two ideas of *saṁlabhya* and *paratva*, accessibility and over-powering greatness. The two aspects of the Divine are fundamental. What cannot be easily reconciled on the purely aesthetic plane seems to be synthesized in religious experience. The *Upanisads* abound in paradoxical declarations of this profound intimacy and infinity of the Divine. Śrī Kṛṣṇa, in His mighty self-revelation in the eleventh chapter of the *Gītā*, is pictured as having the sun and moon as His two eyes. Arjuna exclaims, *Hṛsito'smi dṛṣtvā bhayena ca pravyathitam mano me*.<sup>2</sup> Rāmānuja explains the sun as signifying blazing powers, *pratāpa*, and the moon as representing *prasāda*, condescending grace. This seems to be a happy amalgamation of the two paradoxical attributes of God. The aesthetic dichotomy is resolved in Rāmānuja's idea of God and his interpretation of the *vīṣṇurūpa*. The root of this elaboration is already contained in the *Viṣṇu-purāṇa* description of the form of Viṣṇu as *śubhāśraya*.

### Two types art

An aesthetic patterned on the basis of Rāmānuja's philosophy cannot but be heavily loaded with Vedāntic thought. A legitimate question arises and whether such a line of thinking leaves room for the autonomy of the aesthetic consciousness and the cult of 'Art for Art's sake', needs consideration.

Some elementary principles must be noted before the question can be properly discussed. Aesthetic experience is primarily a state of pleasure. But the pleasure is of a contemplative nature. It is pleasure arising on the contemplation of a perceived or imagined object. As it is said, it is a

1. *Śrūta-prakāśikā* 4.10 ad 1  
*Tattvamuktā-kalāpa* 2.65

2. *Bhagavad-Gītā* 11.45.

'relevant pleasure' with an 'objective correlate'. Hence it stands different from pleasures of escape and pleasures accompanying the satisfaction of unaesthetic desires. In the classification of pleasures given in the *Gītā*, it comes under *sāttvika* pleasure. It is because of this *sāttvika* character that even tragic situations, depicted in literature, can be sources of aesthetic enjoyment. It affords the required 'psychic distance'. It is contemplative in the sense that it is not an action-conditioned satisfaction. The executive work of the artist is for purposes of securing a full vision of the aesthetic object, and thus subordinate to the 'full seeing'. In being contemplative, it is akin to intellectual or theoretical satisfaction. But there is a vital distinction, that its motivation is not the propounding of a true or objectively tenable view of things. It seeks a vision of the beautiful as an end in itself, be it perceptual or imaginative, with a 'willing suspension of disbelief'. The concern with truth, metaphysical or scientific, does not enter into the approach here. The fundamental interest is to contemplate on a thing of beauty, irrespective of its objective existence or otherwise. Fiction is not excluded from the realm of the aesthetic object, provided it is artistically convincing in the sense of being possible.

In this background of general aesthetics, we have to construe what would be the stand of Rāmānuja's philosophy on the autonomy of art. It is necessary to distinguish two levels of art, that which is manifestly secular, with no spiritual motivation, and that which is integrated as a factor within the practice of *bhakti*. Something definite can be conjectured on these two levels.

(a) Art may be secular in conscious intention; but in so far as it depicts real beauty and sublimity, according to the general view of *vibhūti*, it must carry suggestions of the Immanent Infinite. If it is a source of real joy, as all joy flows from

*Brahman*, the only source of joy according to the *Upaniṣads*, it must be in some way an unknowing experience of *Brahman*. It cannot be cut off from that fundamental principle of beauty and joy. For carrying this touch of *Brahman*, all that is required of the work of art is that it should be true to its nature and accomplish its final purpose of contemplative pleasure. It should be free art for its own sake and, by virtue of its perfection, it inevitably establishes an unintended communion with the Divine. Thus, there is no jeopardy to the maxim of 'Art for Art's sake', but still at its height of triumph such art carries a self-transcendent message.

(b) At the second level, art participates integrally in the wholeness of the spiritual pursuit characteristic of *bhakti*. The cognitive aspect of personality seeks the Divine through *śravaṇa*, *manana*, *nididhyāsana* and *sākṣātkāra*. The volitional or active nature expresses itself in *karma-yoga* in the preliminary stages and flows into loving service called *kainkarya* or *sevā* in the advanced stage. The emotional and imaginative nature takes shape as love, *prīti* and *dhyāna* filled with *prīti*. It is the last aspect that manifests itself in the aesthetic life of *bhakti*. Now, spiritual art that is the materialisation of *bhakti*, is not independent of *jñāna* and *sevā*. It cannot be brought under 'Art for Art's sake', but is art impelled by the devotional zest and contributing to the fullness of Godward endeavour. The question is whether the art-factor suffers diminution in this fusion. Does it lose its innate rapture, because it includes in itself *jñāna* and *sevā*? Does *jñāna*, in its turn, lose its truth-value because it is fused with love of God and work dedicated to God? Does righteous endeavour become less righteous, because it is governed by the understanding of God and saturated with love of God? In general, do the three ultimate values of truth, goodness and beauty lose the elements of intrinsic value posses-

sed by them in their severalty, when they enter into a process of joint realisation? It seems to be that they could not reach their full stature when pursued in mutual isolation, as they were provisionally in their initial realisation. They acquire enhancement in this supreme synthesis. For truth to be alienated from beauty and goodness is a privation. For beauty, to rest on mere 'suspension of disbelief' and not on the certitude of authentic insight, and for it to be divorced from the life of holiness, is to lose a part of its vital substance. For goodness, not to be founded on the reality-factor and not to have the benefit of the aesthetic contemplativeness, is to be just preparatory to fuller actualisation. The conclusion may be hazarded, in the light of these considerations, that art that is spiritualised, though losing its autonomy, gains in the scale of values. Well may Vedānta Deśika spurn the mess of earthly pottage and cast aside trivial themes and opt for the inexhaustible riches of God. Good art may flourish in its autonomy, but great art finds its fulfilment in what is more than mere art.

### *Theory of rasa in Viśiṣṭādvaita*

The poetic theory of *Rasa* seems to be favouring a kind of pseudo-Advaitism for a long time, and some critical clarification in the light of Rāmānuja's thought needs to be made on the subject. The theory is founded on Bharata's treatise on Dramatics. It describes eight fundamental emotional propensities of man and depicts how these evolve into eight enjoyable states of emotion, called *rasa*, in the spectators of drama. These emotions are evoked by the appropriate objects, *vibhāvas*, presented in an idealised manner (*alaukika*) on the stage with all the accessory and associated factors. Vedānta Deśika points out in his *Nyāya-siddhāntajana* that the basic emotional potentialities, *sthāyibhāvas*, are all forms of *dharma-bhūta-jñāna*, conscious-

ness adjectival to the self, and are not a bundle of distinct faculties. He also asserts that the list is not complete as it does not provide for *śānta-rasa*, the enjoyment at the spectacle of a spiritual life. That such a life is not one of inert quietude but an active exercise of Godward energy, renders it suitable for dramatic reproduction.<sup>3</sup> The locus of the *rasa*, the aesthetic delight, is certainly the spectator, and it lies in an imaginative 'empathy' with the feelings represented in the play on the stage. The spectator's emotional identification with the feelings displayed in his state of *sattva*, overcoming inertia and ego-centric pre-occupations does bring out the final aesthetic joy. These are the well-known tenets of the *Rasa*-theory.

It is to be remarked that the identity of the feeling of the spectator with what is depicted by the actor and with that of the poet and even of the character presented, does not lead to *Advaita*. The aesthetic object, *vibhāva*, is there in the dramatic presentation, and no identification with it is required or posited. It is only identification with the feelings it evokes that is involved in the enjoyment of *rasa*. No fusion of the subject and object is there in the experience. There is just a duplication of the feelings arising in reaction to the object in the poet, the character, the actor and the spectator. Such a community of feeling is actually invoked by Vedānta Deśika in explanation of the *bhogasāmya* between the *jīvātman* and *Paramātman*, in the stage of *mokṣa*, in spite of the distinction between the two in that *jagadvyāpāra* is uniquely characteristic of the Supreme *Ātman*.<sup>4</sup> The *vibhāva*, the aesthetic object, stands in undiminished objectivity, on which rests securely the unfoldment of the subject's *sthāyibhāva* into

3. See also his *Sankalpa-sūrvodaya*, Kanchipuram edition, 10.4.

4. Cf. *Virodha-parihāra*, Kanchipuram edition, p. 382.

the *rasa*-state. Jagannātha regrets this necessity for an objective support for *rasa*, but for which *rasānubhava* would be straightaway the same as *Brahmānubhava* of the Advaitic School.

Neither the subject of *rasa*, nor its object, is lost in the other. There is just a unification of the emotions of the subject in response to the object. This is all that seems to be the essential fact of the situation according to the *Rasa* theory. It stands incorporated in the Viśiṣṭādvaitic theory in the hands of masters like Vedānta Deśika.

Something more can be naturally said from Rāmānuja's standpoint on the subject-object relation in the stage of joy or *ānanda* of which aesthetic experience is a good instance. In the *Bhūmādhikaraṇa* of the *Śrībhāṣya*, (1. 3. 7-8) the related *Chāndogya* (VII) passage is interpreted as representing the joy arising in the experience of the all-inclusive Infinite. The passage does not signify for Rāmānuja the elimination of the object, nor is it understood as propounding the joyous nature of the subject resting in itself, bereft of the object. In the same way, the *Daharādhikaraṇa* (1. 3. 13-22) speaks of the individual subject as growing into its fullness of natural splendour on its approach to *Brahman*, the Supreme Light. Thus, the subject too remains in the supreme experience. Rather, it attains in it to the fullness of its individual stature. Only pleasure of a

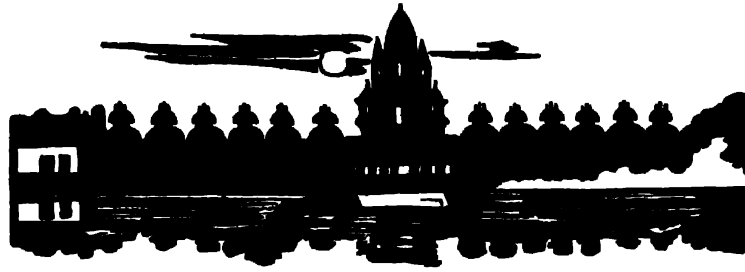
*tāmāsa* kind induces self-oblivion, as Sudarśana Sūri remarks.<sup>5</sup> The *Ānandamayādhikaraṇa* (1. 1. 13-20) has a strong and categorical pronouncement on the issue of the difference or identity between the subject and object in the state of *ānanda*: *Yallābhāt yāh ānandi bhavati, sa sa eveti anunnattah ko bravīti?* (Who but a mad man will say that by attaining whichever being whoever becomes blissful, —he is himself that same blissful being?)<sup>6</sup>

There is one necessary addition to be made. The *jīva* who meditates on *Brahman* must not look upon his object of adoration as outside his self, but as located in the interior of his own spiritual personality. This is brought out well in the *Śrībhāṣya* (4. 1. *Adhi.* 2). Again, in the state of *mekṣa*, he is said to realise the Divine Infinite as immanent in his own soul (4. 4. *Adhi.* 2). These fundamental propositions must govern our understanding of the subject-object relation in the experience of aesthetic joy. The reality of the individual subject, the reality of the Supreme Object and Its determining immanence in the former are the three relevant aspect of the highest state of *ānanda*.

(Concluded)

5. *Śrūta-prakāśikā* 4.1.1

6. *Śrībhāṣya* 1.1.20



## INSIGHT AND MANIFESTATION: A WAY OF PRAYER IN A CHRISTIAN CONTEXT—I

Dr BEATRICE BRUTEAU

One of the most popular and general definitions of prayer is that it is a 'lifting of the mind and heart to God'. But perhaps we may also say that it is a matter of coming to know and to coincide with, or to play one's full role in, The Reality. Even though I am going to describe one particular way of prayer in one particular context, I feel it is valuable to situate the discussion in the widest context that still seems relevant. And in the present case I am interested not to be bound to the dualism implicit in theism or to a purely internal and subjective exercise of only the mental and affective faculties.

I like to think that prayer involves *all* our faculties, directed toward the *whole* of Reality and the *totality* of meaning: all of me toward and in all of It. This will mean that prayer includes expression and action (manifestation) as well as interiorization and transcendence (insight). The way in which these seemingly opposed motions are reconciled will also, I hope, help us to overcome a division of prayer attitudes into those which are dualistic and those which are nondualistic.

Prayer 'in a Christian context' is prayer that has something to do with Jesus: either he is the object of it, or the example of it, or in some other way he mediates or enables it. In fact, I will argue, the theol-

ogy which identifies Jesus as Logos Incarnate gives us a very good base from which to develop a description of prayer mediated through him as both insight and manifestation.

The Logos, or Word of God, is the single unitary principle (the 'only begotten Son') through which the Absolute One (the 'Father') expresses or manifests itself in the world.<sup>1</sup> It is therefore also the single and unitary principle through which realization of the One can be attained<sup>2</sup> and through which alone participation in the divine manifestation is possible.<sup>3</sup>

Thus the Logos is the Mediator, or Interface, between the Absolute One to which insight aspires and the universal flux of the Many in which the One is manifest in the world. It is the will of the One to manifest itself through the Many, and it is the will of the Many to gain insight into the One. The Logos is the 'level' of Reality on

1. 'All things were made through him, and without him was not anything made that was made' John 1:3. 'No one has seen God at any time; but the only begotten Son, who is in the bosom of the Father, he has manifested him' John 1:18.

2. 'No one comes to the Father but by me.' John 14:6.

3. 'He who abides in me, and I in him, he it is that bears much fruit, for apart from me you can do nothing.' John 15:5.

which this insight takes place and from which this manifestation originates. The meaning of Christian prayer, therefore, according to this line of thought, is to realize oneself as situated, or 'located', on the level of the Logos Interface, or put in traditional mystic terms, to be united with the Son of God.

That the Logos should be available to us incarnate as a human being<sup>4</sup> gives the prayer a concrete starting point which lies within the capacity of anyone. The one who prays may thus begin in an everyday person-to-person dualistic fashion by relating to this human being who incarnates the Logos principle. But by pursuing and pressing this relationship, one will enter more and more intimately into the interior reality of the Incarnate Logos; and eventually, in order to fulfill the desire of the dualistic relationship really to know and to be bonded to that Person, one will have to enter so completely into the interior movements of that Person that the last stage of the relationship will take on the character of a nondualistic state. And ultimately the one who prays will be obliged, by the fulfillment of the desire for insight, to join in the activity of manifestation which is the essential occupation of the Logos.

This is, in summary outline, the idea that I propose to set forth here as a way of prayer in a Christian context. I should like to emphasize that it is 'a' way and by no means 'the' way. And it is only 'in a Christian context', not definitively 'Christian prayer'. Christianity has been a dogmatic and authoritarian religion, judging rigorously whether statements made in its name are true to its conception of itself. What follows does not pretend to be authoritative in this sense or to be concerned to accommodate itself to any system of

authority that claims to speak for the Christian religion. It is simply a way of looking at the experiences that some people have in prayer, and it may therefore be useful to others.

### *Both Insight and Manifestation*

'Insight' refers to those experiences in which I the subject see or understand 'or love an object. In the strong sense it means that I *see into* the inmost reality of the object, know the deepest truth of it I am no longer ignorant or blind with respect to it I know it; I have spiritually assimilated its reality.

In the case of the life of prayer, 'insight' refers to the goal that is expressed as 'knowing and loving God' or 'seeing the truth' or 'being enlightened' or 'realizing the Ultimate'. The journey to Insight is often regarded as a passage from the unreal to the Real, from Samsara to Nirvana, from the Many to the One.

'Manifestation', on the other hand, bespeaks a movement in the opposite direction. The subject has the experience of being the author and origin of some reality and projecting it outward. If 'truth' is the adequation of thought and thing, this can be brought about either by making the thought match the thing, which is the case in knowledge or insight, or by making the thing match the thought, which is the case in creation, or manifestation. One who manifests coincides with the reality that one is and expresses this reality (by action, image, imitation, symbol, etc.) outwardly in the environment. It is a movement from the One to the Many, from the general to the particular, from the Absolute to the relative, from the formless to the formed or from the Form to the embodiment.

Now, it seems to me that very often the spiritual life, where it is studied as the mystical life, as distinguished from the moral or religious life (concerned with

4. 'The Word became flesh and dwelt among us, full of grace and truth.' John 1:14.

creed, code, and cult), has been presented as a matter only of attaining insight. All our efforts are directed to leaving this multi-form world and cleaving to the One God.

But once one is so united with God, then what? Usually this is considered the end of the story: the prince and princess are wed and live happily ever after. However, Sri Aurobindo criticized Sankaracharya for taking this attitude, saying that he had told only half the story. And I have heard that Swami Brahmananda said that 'spiritual life begins with samadhi'.<sup>5</sup> In a Christian context one would say, if one is united with God, then one must do what God does, and what God does is be endlessly self-expressive (as well as self-uniting) in the Trinity, and create the world (worlds).

We have to bear in mind that 'world' is a variable. The 'world' that God/we will create when we coincide with the deeper levels of our reality will not be the same as the world that we abandoned in order to find God. It will not be the same even though we do go back to hewing wood and drawing water in the realization that Nirvana is Samsara, because this realization will have completely changed our perception of it. And within the confines of the relative, finite, changing world, we may well do quite creative things, making the everyday world different even in our usual sense of the word. In fact, this creative relation to the world, I will say, is a central fac-

tor in the prayer that takes place 'in or through Jesus'.

The 'way of prayer' offered here, therefore, will suggest that both the insight movement and the manifestation movement are intrinsic to the prayer activity and that they are joined in the experience of union with Jesus. The insight movement leads into the reality of Jesus which turns out to be the creative action of manifestation.

### *The Way of Insight*

People who first begin to pray in some relation to Jesus frequently start off by asking something of him. They begin with the prayer of *petition*. In the Gospel stories we see many instances of this. People bring their problems, their needs, and beseech Jesus to do something about them. Sometimes when they have gotten what they asked, they simply go off again about their own affairs without so much as a thank-you.<sup>6</sup>

The point is that the one who prays is more interested in getting the job done than interested in Jesus. Jesus comes into it as the one who does the job. Even if one is grateful, the consciousness may still be centered in the sense of personal need and personal gratification, the local-self experience being so intense that it is not possible to be very aware of any other perspective or larger field of meaning.<sup>7</sup>

But sometimes also those who have had their petitions granted find that their attention moves from their private concern to a sense of awe in the presence of anyone

5. Sri Aurobindo, *The Life Divine*, Vol II Part I, chap. VI. 'Reality and the Cosmic Illusion.' (There are various editions, with different paginations, all available from Sri Aurobindo Ashram, Pondicherry)

'Sri Ramakrishna has shown us a higher state than nirvikalpa samādhi; and Maharaj said that spiritual life begins with nirvikalpa samādhi.' Reported to the writer, from a monastic diary of conversations with Swami Prabhavananda, 1950.

6. The story of the cleansing of the ten lepers, only one of whom came back to give thanks, beginning at Luke 17:12.

7. (After the feeding of the five thousand) 'Jesus answered them, "Truly, truly, I say to you, you seek me, not because you saw signs, but because you ate your fill of the loaves."' John 6:26.



who can do such great deeds.<sup>8</sup> Part of the interest in the one who prays, at this stage, is a sort of curiosity or fascination for an experience of another kind of reality.

This can lead to a more serious interest in Jesus and what we may call the prayer of *appreciation*. (We should not be too rigid about lining up stages and putting the life of prayer in a certain sequence. I am doing it this way in order to develop a sense of a gradually increasing penetration into the interiority of Jesus in its dynamic and personal reality.) In this prayer, the one who prays does not have some third-party job on hand, but only looks at Jesus for himself, to study and value his qualities. One does have in mind, however, to try to imitate these qualities, to try to gain similar goods for oneself. In this sense the focus is still on improving the one who prays, and Jesus is the means to this end.

What one does in this prayer is to observe Jesus carefully, study his character and action, situation and motivation, compare these with one's own situation and character with a view to making appropriate alterations in oneself. The prayer may take the form of asking 'What would Jesus do in a case like this?' or after reviewing some work of Jesus, asking 'How can I do likewise in my life?' One analyzes, tries to get a new point of view on one's life which can encourage a different attitude and outlook, and then one makes resolutions for practical action. As a follow-up, one examines oneself with respect to the resolutions and in general tries to train and discipline oneself to imitate the behaviour and the implied motivations of Jesus.<sup>9</sup>

8. (After the calming of the storm at sea) 'the men marvelled, saying, "What sort of man is this, that even winds and sea obey him?"' Matthew 8:27

9. (After the story of the Good Samaritan) 'Jesus said to him, "Go and do likewise."' Luke 10:37. After washing his disciples' feet,

This type of prayer obliges one to look very intently at Jesus, and at some point one may be distracted from one's original intention of using Jesus as a model for improving oneself and just be caught by the beauty of Jesus himself. The consciousness will forget to be concerned about itself and will be lost in admiration and joy. But Jesus is still only an object of contemplation. It is, so to speak, his picture that one looks at. He does not look back. He is thought about, but he himself is absent. In petition one had addressed oneself to Jesus, but one had not been really interested in *him* but only in what he could do for one. Now there is more interest in Jesus for himself but one considers him only in the third person one says 'he is thus and so' *about* him.

The important movement from this stage is again to speak directly to Jesus, in the second person, saying 'you'. Jesus himself is now present. But this time one speaks to Jesus *about* Jesus—and about oneself in the context of a developing personal relationship. What one focuses on is the relationship itself, the growing friendship. Friends talk to each other. This is the prayer of *dialogue*.

The one who prays may speak about what was done in the previous prayer of appreciation and will note the extraordinary shift in consciousness that takes place when one moves from contemplating the beauty of a picture to communicating face to face with that beauty in person. One begins by speaking about these subjects but soon discovers that this is only 'background music' for what is really going on, which is the sense of being in living contact with Jesus. Nothing that one can talk *about* is anywhere near

Jesus said, 'I have given you an example, that you also should do as I have done.' John 13:15. In the Last Discourse, Jesus said, 'I do as the Father has commanded me, so that the world may know that I love the Father.' John 14:31.

comparable in interest and importance to *the fact of* this contact and intercommunication.<sup>10</sup> And so in a sense it doesn't matter what one talks of, since this is not the point. One is not trying to get answers or solutions to problems. One is experiencing *being* in a new way.

Two things happen at this point. The one who prays of course sees deeper into Jesus. This is quite different from looking at his picture, studying reports about him, analyzing his qualities, reasoning about them, and trying to draw lessons from them. The living reality of any person is always incomparably richer than any of the behaviour products that can be reported of that person. Furthermore, when one is engaged in a person-to-person relationship, the intercommunication itself is a living reality and is experienced in the moment as a living reality. There is living, energy-filled reality in it, moving both ways between the two persons.

Therefore, the second thing that happens is that Jesus sees deeper into the one who prays and addresses himself to that deeper level, awakening the realization of it in the one whom he addresses. Because Jesus speaks to a certain reality in the one who prays, that reality comes to life,<sup>11</sup> comes to

self-consciousness and actuality. One becomes larger, and there is a release of new energy.

This is the first warning shock of what is to come, of the transformation of our self-consciousness and our world-consciousness that will be the consequence of intercourse with the consciousness of Jesus. But at this stage we may think that it only means that we are finding our 'real self' as a finer and more rounded and secure personality than we had previously expressed or experienced. We feel that our individual selfhood has somehow matured and come into its own. Our description of ourself has changed. We feel 'forgiven', 'saved'. We do not yet suspect that the whole idea of there being any description of our selfhood at all will be wiped out, and indeed that the very notion of 'individual self' will undergo a radical metamorphosis. We are very aware of the duality in the relationship and we enjoy it. The pleasure comes from the sense of the other being *other* and affirming us from his position of otherness.

Now it is necessary to press the advantage, not to relax. One must push deeper and deeper into Jesus and let him illuminate deeper and deeper levels of reality within oneself. Very strange things begin to happen as this effort progresses. The outward human personality of Jesus expands and fades as one enters more into the interior of his consciousness, and a complementary transformation takes place also in oneself as in a mirror image. What one *is* transcends what one does or what one says or what descriptive traits and qualities one has. In this stage, which we may call the prayer of *intimacy*, what Jesus *is* communes directly with what one *is*, passing through and beyond the mediation of either's behaviour or descriptive qualities. As the descriptions melt and evaporate before the burning radiance of each person's central reality, so the words that would capture those descriptions fail and silence super-

10. The story of the appearance of the Risen Jesus to two of his disciples on the road to Emmaus: "They said to each other, "Did not our hearts burn within us while he talked to us on the road ..?""

11. The raising of Jairus' daughter: "Taking her by the hand he said to her, "Little girl. I say to you, arise." And immediately the girl got up. And he told them to give her something to eat." Mark 5:41-43. The raising of Lazarus: "(Jesus) cried with a loud voice, "Lazarus, come out." The dead man came out. ...bound with bandages ..Jesus said to them, "Unbind him and let him go." John 11:43-44. In applying these stories to our prayer life, we may as well take note of the instructions to unbind and to feed the new life.

venes. The two luminosities gradually grow together.

One can no longer be said to be 'looking at' Jesus, as though he had a surface from which light was reflected. One has looked right *into* him as he has looked into oneself. And looking at/into him in order to understand him, one is regarding his living consciousness. But the only way to 'regard' a living consciousness is to be conscious of what it is conscious of. The one who prays discovers that what is happening is that one is actually looking up to God the Father and out on the world through the Consciousness of Jesus.

This is not the same as the exercise one did in the stage of studying Jesus and trying to figure out what he thought about a situation. It is not 'as if'. It is the experience of being admitted into a personal world, as though one had asked 'Where do you live?' and the other had answered, 'Come and see'.<sup>12</sup> One sees the other 'at home', and gets a sense of the rhythms, the atmosphere, the vital core of the other. But the only way one gets a sense of these rhythms is by getting into the rhythms oneself. One feels that Jesus and one are somehow yoked together and move as a single unit.<sup>13</sup> The act of praying at this stage is no longer bounded by any demarcated time of prayer. Every moment of living is praying, because praying is living—one sharing the life of Jesus and Jesus sharing one's life, like two lives that have flowed together, or one life in two persons.<sup>14</sup> There is no satisfactory way of saying it, but it seems perfectly clear in the experience.

Where is the 'individual self' now? There is no way to answer, because the question no longer makes sense. One could say that

it has been surrendered to the Divine, or has merged into the Ultimate Reality, or that it is fulfilled in being united to its lover. But to anyone who still experiences the individual self as being the self, the real self, and the only self, any such account will sound like destruction of one's essential being. What has happened is that one has shifted what one means by 'myself'. It had been going on gradually ever since the dialogue began, and one had had steadily to deepen and expand one's sense of selfhood to match the depth and vastness one was discovering in Jesus and which he was evoking in one. We had thought that selfhood was the quintessence of individuation; now it appears that selfhood cannot be individuated in the sense of excluding other selves. On the contrary, this entering into, and sharing the consciousness of, another self is the most characteristic act of a self.

Dualism has passed over into nondualism, by the very intensity of its own dualistic energy. By desiring the other more and more, one was obliged ultimately to enter into the very life of the other. In order to know his mind and his will, so that one might love him the better, one had to be 'entrained' by the rhythmic pattern of his mind, his will; one had to be 'in phase' with him. It was not that one had to think about the same object or have the same opinions or views, or that one had to will the same event. Rather, one's *activity* of seeing, thinking, feeling, willing was united with his *activity*; the dynamisms are united and synchronized.

And so finally one comes into the prayer of *coincidence*, in which it is not even a question of seeing the world through the consciousness of Jesus but of experiencing Jesus' consciousness of himself. If one is really going to unite with the person one loves, one must become vividly aware of that person's sense of identity, the most intimate thing about him.

Jesus experiences himself as the Son of

12. The story of the first meeting of Jesus and two of his disciples. John 1:38-39.

13. 'Take my yoke upon you.' Matthew 11:29.

14. 'In that day you will know that I am in my Father, and you in me, and I in you.' John 14:20.

God, the perfectly obedient one,<sup>15</sup> the beloved one,<sup>16</sup> the very image of the Ultimate,<sup>17</sup> with whom indeed he is one.<sup>18</sup> It is the interior of this experience that is thrown open to the one who prays. But in order to become properly conscious of this, the one who prays must be conscious of it *from the inside*, and there is no way to do this except by experiencing it as being true of oneself. Perhaps it was this experience that provoked St. John of the Cross to exclaim :

Let us rejoice, beloved, and let us go forth to behold ourselves in your beauty that I may resemble you in your beauty and you resemble me in your beauty, and my beauty may be your beauty and your beauty my beauty; wherefore I shall be you in your beauty, and you will be me in your beauty, because your beauty will be my beauty; and therefore we shall behold each other in your beauty.<sup>19</sup>

I think we should notice that in some of these clauses St. John speaks as though there is a distinction between the beloved and himself, and in some of them he speaks as though there is not a distinction. He surely does this because both experiences are true; and if this does not square with our logic, it is because our former method of conceiving distinction is no longer applicable to such an experience.

We have been accustomed to distinguish among things that are objects for our consciousness, and to distinguish any object of

our consciousness from our consciousness itself. But now it is a question of distinguishing two consciousnesses both of which are operating as *subjects*. It is essential to stress that in this experience, the one who prays does not experience the consciousness of the beloved as an object. The whole point of the experience—and the reason why it is not dualistic in the usual sense of that term—is precisely that the consciousness of the beloved is experienced somehow from the inside, that is, *from the subject side*, not as an object.

The experience may, for instance, feel like this: One seems to become aware of the Divine Consciousness, as incarnate in Jesus, as if one is experiencing the consciousness as one's own, and yet be very aware that the acts of that consciousness are far greater than those customary to 'one's own' consciousness. One may experience the Divine Will, say, in its intention to heal, and be astonished at its strength. One may have an impression of a great wind, or a huge ocean wave, or of some enormous irresistible force. But that force, the Will, is not experienced as directed toward oneself—one is not the object of the Will—but rather, one feels the Will *move* through one's own consciousness so that one feels what it feels like to will so mightily. One experiences it as if one is *doing* the willing, and yet one is amazed and overwhelmed by the supernatural power of the Will.<sup>20</sup>

15. 'I have kept my Father's commandments and abide in his love.' John 15:10 'I always do what is pleasing to him.' John 8:29.

16. The voice heard at Jesus' baptism: 'This is my beloved Son, with whom I am well pleased.' Matthew 3:17.

17. 'He who has seen me has seen the Father; how can you say, "Show us the Father"? Do you not believe that I am in the Father and the Father in me?' John 14:9.

18. 'I and the Father are one.' John 10:30.

19. St. John of the Cross, *Spiritual Canticle*, stanza 36.

20. 'The mystic experience ends with the words, "I live yet not I, but God in me," (cf. Galatians 2:20). This feeling of identification, which is the term of mystical activity, has a very important significance. In its early stages the mystic consciousness feels the Absolute in opposition to the Self as mystic activity goes on, it tends to abolish this opposition. . . . When it has reached its term the consciousness finds itself possessed by the sense of a Being at one and the same time greater than the Self and identical with it: great enough to be God, intimate enough to be me.' E. Recejac, *Essai sur les fondements de la Connaissance Mystique*

### *Complex, or Trinitarian, Nondualism*

This type of nondualistic experience is not the same as discovering that there is only one subject in existence, that the whole world has collapsed into a single consciousness, and that we had been mistaken when we had believed that there were many beings. It is neither simple dualism nor simplistic monism. It is an experiential realization of the complex nondualism that is characteristic of personal communion.

In our dualistic moments, we have used images of exclusion, mutual exteriority, and incommunicability to secure our intuition of the independence of the self as agent and to protect ourselves against the insanity of solipsism. In our monistic moments, on the other hand, we have realized that exclusion, incommunicability, and mutual exteriority are false, and we may have concluded that there cannot be more than one real agent. The doctrine of complex unity holds, as against both of these, that a plurality of autonomous agents exist who perfectly indwell one another, and further, that this is *necessary*—both the plurality and the indwelling—because of the nature of selfhood.

It is not necessary for beings to be mutually exterior and incommunicable in order to be autonomous. This is necessary only if the beings are defined by attributes that they possess and by which alone they can be distinguished one from another. If the autonomy is vested rather in the initiative of action rooted in the existential reality of the being, then there can be distinction together with mutual interiority and full communion. But only a personal being—i.e. a reflexively conscious *self*—can fulfill this requirement, can really be an initiator, an author of action. Subpersonal beings act

as parts of cycles or loops of feedback reactions with their environments. A good deal of human behaviour is obviously of this kind, also, but the person, *qua* person, is *capable* of an authoritative act, an act that begins in the person and is not a re-action to an act begun elsewhere.

Persons, therefore, can be both autonomous and mutually indwelling. But, it must also be argued, *person* is not only the kind of being which can do this, it is the kind of being which characteristically does do this, and in fact must do this if it is really to be a person.

The insight discovery, then, of this line of prayer experience is that Ultimate Reality is not of the nature of any kind of object, that is, it is not anything that can possibly be an object for an observing consciousness (God is invisible). It is rather of the nature of selfhood (Brahman is Atman), i.e. the interior realization of one's existence as subject.

'Subject,' of course, is that which does have awareness of 'objects'. But the highest 'object' of which a subject can be aware is another subject like itself. And the only way to bring this awareness to perfection, as outlined in the stages of prayer described above, is to be aware of it as it is aware of itself. This suggests that subjective awareness of objects is a diminished representation of the fullness of subjective being, which is perfect indwelling of another subjectivity. So, if any being's characteristic nature, or essential being, is defined by its highest activity, then a conscious subject is one which is conscious of conscious subjects precisely as subjects.

If this argument has any merit, perhaps it could be applied to the Trinity, and we could say that the Divine Persons are each aware of each subject consciousness in the Godhead. Within the Trinity, there is no object: no Person is outside any other Person. This complete interior coincidence of the Persons is expressed by saying that

(Paris, 1897). translation by S. C. Upton, *Essay on the Bases of the Mystic Knowledge* (London, 1899), p. 45. quoted by Evelyn Underhill in *Mysticism* (New York: Dutton paperback, p. 82).

the Godhead is only one. But that each Person knows and loves each other Person is also true, and for that they must be in some manner distinct. This distinction arises from the existential reality of the autonomous acts of knowing and loving which also constitute the unity. So the plurality and the unity are both referred to the same act, and that act is characteristic of the highest conscious selfhood. If Ultimate Reality is of the nature of selfhood, then because of the nature of selfhood, it must be a complex unity of this sort.

When the one who prays, therefore, is united with the beloved but not simply collapsed into a realization that there never

was anything except that one being, this distinction is not due to a distance between Creator and creature but is the same kind of distinction that prevails inside the Godhead itself. The one who prays is no more separated from God than any one of the Persons of the Godhead is separated from the others. And similarly, the one who prays—in the highest union—is united with all the Divine Persons as they are united with one another.<sup>21</sup>

(To be concluded)

21. 'even as thou, Father, art in me, and I in thee, that they also may be in us.' John 17:21.

## TWO VRNDAVANA GOSVAMINS: RAGHUNĀTHA-DĀSA AND RAGHUNĀTHA BHATTA

PROF. RANJIT KUMAR ACHARJEE

Bengal Vaiṣṇavism derives much of its strength and vitality from the devotional and theological literature developed by the Vṛndāvana Gosvāmins. But all the six Vṛndāvana Gosvāmins had not contributed in equal measure towards the formulation and enrichment of the metaphysics, practice and social codes of Vaiṣṇavism. It is well-known that the doctrinal basis of the sect was founded principally by Sanātana, Rūpa and Jīva. Among these three Gosvāmins, Sanātana and Rūpa developed the theory of of *rasa* and brought the basic tenets of Vaiṣṇava theology within the conceptual framework of Caitanyaism, and Jīva strengthened the philosophical foundation of this school. Gopāla Bhatta is believed to have codified Vaiṣṇava ritualism. The remaining two Gosvāmins, Raghunātha-dāsa and Raghunātha Bhatta, are equally held in high esteem and reverence as teachers, not so much for their scholastic

pursuits or profundity of thought, for they did not write much, but solely for their austerity and modesty, passionate devotion and saintly character. They practised what Caitanya taught, and thus set personal examples worthy of emulation by all those who are interested in the spiritual quest, in accordance with the ideals of Caitanyaism in particular.

### *Raghunātha-dāsa*

Raghunātha-dāsa's life presents a shining example of the renunciation of worldly wealth, power and fortune for the sake of spiritual advancement. Born with a silver spoon in his mouth in a *kāyastha* family of Saptagrām in the district of Hooghly (West Bengal), from his boyhood he showed no inclination to a life of ease, luxury and sensuous enjoyment. He was the only son of Govardhan Majumdar, a rich landlord of

Saptagrām who enjoyed a princely income of twelve lakhs of rupees per annum. Though the exact date of birth of Raghunāth-dāsa is not known, old records indicate that he was certainly a junior contemporary of Śrī Caitanya. (1486-1533 A.D.) Raghunātha received the close attention and affection of all the members of his family, as he was the only son in a wealthy joint-family of two brothers; Govardhan and elder Hiranya. He was brought up in an environment of plenty and luxury but strangely enough, Raghunātha, who was the only heir to the vast fortune, showed clear and unmistakable inclinations towards religious life and practices from his very boyhood. Evidently this proved disquieting to his parents and uncle. His innate religious tendencies were enkindled and intensified when he came into close contact with the pious and highly spiritual personality of Saint Haridāsa at Saptagrām. Raghunātha was greatly impressed by the saintly character and spiritually powerful personality of Haridāsa which aroused his dormant desire for asceticism and renunciation. He had the opportunity of serving Haridāsa with all sincerity and devotion. Haridāsa blessed him heartily

With the passage of time, his strong inner urge for leading a pious life showed no sign of retardation. On the contrary, it deepened and intensified. Naturally this made his father apprehensive and he tried the time-old technique for distracting him by arranging his marriage with a charming young girl at a comparatively young age of seventeen. But this produced no perceptible effect in Raghunātha's attitude to life. Caitanya embraced sannyasa in the year 1510 A.D. He was being hailed as a great emancipator of mankind, and people in large numbers turned to his 'religion of love' for solace and peace. Raghunātha came to know all about it and felt a passionate longing to have the pious company of Caitanya. Caitanya paid a visit to the venerable Advaita's house at Sāntipur. In

his eagerness to meet Caitanya, Raghunātha left for Sāntipur. Advaitācārya knew young Raghunātha well and was aware of his devotional and ascetic temperament. Advaita received him with all affection and love. Raghunātha's long-cherished desire was fulfilled; he obtained Caitanya's affection and blessing. Again on the occasion of Caitanya's visit to Sāntipur on his way to Rāmakeli, Raghunātha met Caitanya for the second time and expressed his desire to renounce the worldly life and also to accompany him to Puri. Caitanya, however, forbade him not to do so at that moment, for he realized that the time for his renunciation had not yet ripened. On the contrary, Caitanya advised him to perform all the obligatory family and social duties in a disinterested manner and assured him that at the appropriate moment he would certainly obtain the grace of Kṛṣṇa.<sup>1</sup>

Raghunātha returned home as a radically changed man and he found it difficult to resume his normal household duties. His paternal residence appeared to be a dungeon to him, and he made several attempts to escape from it which were, however, foiled by the guards engaged by his apprehensive father. Raghunātha realized that Nityānanda's approval and blessing might make his spiritual quest fruitful. His meeting with Nityānanda at Pānihāti, a place not far off from Calcutta, stimulated his spiritual longings considerably. A significant as well as interesting event occurred during this meeting which is still commemorated by the devout Vaiṣṇavas through an annual festival called *Dandamahotsava*.<sup>2</sup> A detailed

1. Kṛṣṇadāsa Kavirāja. *Caitanya-Caritāmṛta*. Madhyalilā-Chapter 16. Edited by Harekrishna Mukhopadhyaya & S. C. Majumdar. (Calcutta, Dev sahitya Kutir. 1979) P. 514.

2. Sri Ramakrishna attended this festival at Panihati several times, and the *Kathāmṛta* (*The Gospel of Sri Ramakrishna*) gives a vivid account of the Master's ecstatic participation in it.

account of it has been given in the *Caitanya-Caritāmṛta*, Antya-līlā, chapter VI. Perceiving Raghunātha's latent desire for ascetic life while outwardly engaged in matters mundane, Nityānanda laughingly called him a 'deceiver', and ordered him to feed all the assembled Vaiṣṇavas, as a 'punishment'. Evidently this 'punishment' was a boon to young Raghunātha. He arranged a sumptuous feast and distributed huge sums of money to the Vaiṣṇavas present on that occasion. It is said that people hailing from different classes of the society participated in the function which virtually turned into an inter-community feast. Many modern scholars suggest that by arranging such an inter-community feast Nityānanda took a most daring step in the caste-ridden, conservative society of Bengal. He sought to demolish the caste barriers especially in religious matters so as to usher in an era of social equality and brotherhood. This can well be considered to be the most significant contribution of Nityānanda to the Caitanya Movement.<sup>3</sup> *Caitanya-Caritāmṛta* further states that Raghunātha dāsa begged for Nityānanda's blessings so that he might attain the grace of Caitanya—a long-cherished dream he had nourished from boyhood. Nityānanda was really overwhelmed by the rare modesty and purity of his character and also by the sincerity of his purpose and singlemindedness in his devotion. He along with the other Vaiṣṇavas present there wholeheartedly wished the speedy fulfilment of his intense desire.<sup>4</sup>

Raghunātha returned home thereafter. But the pangs of the separation from his dear Master, Sri Caitanya was too much for him to bear, and he was constantly seeking a suitable opportunity to free himself from the vile

servitude to the domestic life. Apprehending his possible escape, his father tightened the security measures. His movements were restricted and he was virtually made a prisoner in his own house. But as the divine dispensation would have it, one day the opportunity came and he escaped the vigilance of his apprehensive father, renouncing, as Kṛṣṇadāsa Kavirāja informs us, wealth befitting Indra and his *apsarā*-like wife. His desire for meeting Caitanya was so deep and intense that he cared not a bit for the hardships of such a long journey on foot. He avoided the main public thoroughfare for fear of being noticed by those known to him or to his father. Bearing all sorts of physical hardships, thirst, hunger and sleeplessness, Raghunātha reached the holy town of Puri after twelve days and offered himself as a flower at the feet of Śrī Caitanya. Needless to mention, he was warmly welcomed by Caitanya and immediately admitted into the community of his intimate associates. Svarūpa Dāmodara, a close associate of Caitanya at Puri and well-versed in Vaiṣṇava theory and practice, was entrusted with the task of imparting appropriate religious training to him.

Raghunātha-dāsa epitomized modesty and sincerity, and his inclination towards asceticism was undoubtedly keen and deep. After some days, he started begging alms in front of the main gate of Jagannātha temple which also enabled him to have glimpses of Lord Jagannātha. All the while, he went on reciting devotedly the Lord's name. In a short time he learnt Vaiṣṇava theology and the fundamentals of Vaiṣṇava discipline under the able guidance of Svarūpa Dāmodara. But in order to have the Master's own instructions on religious practices, Raghunātha once entreated Caitanya, through Svarūpa Dāmodara, to enlighten and advise him the right course of spiritual advancement. In reply Caitanya said that in addition to what had been

3. G. S. Roychoudhury: *Śrī Caitanya-deva O Tāhār Pāṣaḍgaṇa* (Bengali) (Calcutta: Calcutta University, 1957) pp. 90-93

4. *Caitanya-Caritāmṛta*: Antya-līlā. Chapter vi. P. 530.



taught, he should bear in mind the following cardinal maxims :

'Listen not to distracting words about worldly matters, nor participate in such a conversation. Take not rich, delicious food pleasant to the tongue, nor wear costly and attractive garments. Respect the persons who are to be respected. And recite Kṛṣṇa's holy name without any interruption. In remembrance, worship and offer obeisance to Rādhā-Kṛṣṇa as if you were in Vraja (Vṛndāvana).'<sup>5</sup> In essence, this is what had been taught in Caitanya's own beautiful poem *Śikṣāṣṭaka*— a collection of eight Sanskrit verses containing his simple and passionate faith.

As days passed by, Raghunātha's tendency towards extreme austerity and asceticism intensified and inflamed, and he endeavoured to translate Caitanya's teachings into practice. He gave up begging at the temple gate, as he felt that it had not been heartily approved by Caitanya. Also giving up the practice of begging from door to door, Raghunātha collected rotten and decomposed residues of prasāda (food offered to Lord Jagannātha) from the drains and took them with a little salt, and that too only once a day. Being moved by his extraordinary austerity and exemplary asceticism, Caitanya blessed him and made a gift of a *Govardhana-śilā*, a dark-coloured stone used as a symbol of Kṛṣṇa which he himself had worshipped, and a *gunja-mālā* (rosary) which he himself had used for his Japa on Kṛṣṇa. Raghunātha realized the spiritual significance of the gifts, and throughout his life he worshipped the *Govardhana-śilā* with elaborate service and unflinching devotion. He had the privilege of serving Caitanya for sixteen long years as his close attendant and of observing the depth, beauty and sublimity of Caitanya-*līlā* at close quarters. During the last twelve years of his life, Caitanya spent his days in an

ecstatic state of divine inebriation (*premon-māda*) and became incapable of taking care of himself. Svarūpa Dāmodara, Raghunātha-dāsa and other intimate disciples took care of the Master with loving solicitude.

After the passing away of Caitanya and Svarūpa Dāmodara, Raghunātha-dāsa left Puri for Vṛndavana where he joined Rūpa and Sanātana. But he was so overwhelmed with grief at the demise of Caitanya that he even went to the extent of attempting to kill himself by jumping down from the Govardhan mountain.<sup>6</sup> Sanātana and Rūpa, however, successfully persuaded him not to take such a step. With loving care and tenderness they accepted him as their younger brother. At Vṛndavana he led a self-imposed life of extreme austerity and asceticism. The *Caitanya-Caritāmṛta* tells us that Raghunātha embodied in himself innumerable noble qualities. Caitanya himself is said to have admired the rare Vaiṣṇava qualities of his character and acknowledged the depth and intensity of his devotion. He used to spend the major part of the day in uninterrupted remembrance of the Lord, recitation of His Holy Name. He slept only for a short while, tasted no delicious food, and ate just enough for bare subsistence. He clothed himself like a destitute. He also found delight in narrating the wonderful religious fervour manifested in the later years of Caitanya's life at Puri. All through his life, he scrupulously adhered to the instructions imparted by the Master.<sup>7</sup> Kavi Karnapur in his *Caitanya-Candrodaya* aptly observes that all these qualities assembled together made Raghunātha the perfect embodiment of renunciation.

According to *Viśva-kośa*, Raghunātha-

<sup>6</sup>. *Viśva-Kośa*—A Bengali Encyclopaedia. Vol 16. Edited by N. C. Basu (Calcutta) P. 140. Also. *Bhakta-Carita-Mālā* (Bengali) by Sashi Bhusan Basu (Calcutta: Indian Publishing House, 1918) P. 170.

<sup>7</sup>. *Caitanya-Caritāmṛta*: Antya-līlā. Chapter vi. P. 537.

dāsa lived at a place adjacent to Govardhana during the first part of his Vṛndavana days, and reclaimed Rādhā-Kuṇḍa and Śyāma-Kuṇḍa, two important spots associated with Kṛṣṇa-līlā.<sup>8</sup> It is said that he spent the last days of his life near Rādhā-Kuṇḍa till his death at the ripe age of 85 years. Dr. S. K. De writes 'From his *Vraja-vilāsa-stava*, it appears that he became blind in his old age and his *Dāna-keli-cintāmaṇi* was composed after he had become blind.'<sup>9</sup> In his old age, he had the constant company of and sincere service from Kṛṣṇadāsa Kavirāja, who along with Rūpa and Sanātana learnt from him the minutest details of Caitanya-līlā at Puri which constituted a major portion of the subject-matter of the *Caitanya-Caritāmṛta*. However, the Bengali encyclopaedia *Viśva-kośa* gives a different version of the closing years of his life. Raghunātha, so goes the narration, returned to Puri after the demise of Rūpa and Sanātana and breathed his last there.<sup>10</sup> But this seems to be most unlikely, for it might be reasonably asserted that after the passing away of Caitanya and Svarūpa Dāmodara, Puri had no special attraction for him other than Lord Jagannātha. Furthermore, it was not feasible in his old age to undertake such an arduous journey on foot from Vṛndāvana to Puri.

Raghunātha-dāsa was the only non-Brahmin religious guide among the six Gosvāmins, but for that reason, he was not less respected in the Vaiṣṇava society. The religion of love promulgated by Caitanya seeks to emphasize that religion should not be the exclusive possession of any particular community. 'Caitanya never, for instance, encouraged any particular caste or person to have the monopoly of the function of a spiritual guide or teacher, himself select-

ing men like Rūpa, Sanātana and Raghunātha-dāsa for the task of propagating the faith.'<sup>11</sup>

Raghunātha-dāsa had no special aptitude for the composition of any theological or metaphysical treatise. Nevertheless, he was endowed with some literary capacity and he composed in lucid Sanskrit some lyrical hymns, *stavas* or *stotras*, numbering about twenty-nine which were compiled together under the title *Stavāvali* or *Stavamālā*. Some of these *stavas* were composed in praises of Chaitanya (*Caitanya-Stava* and *Gourāṅga-Stava-Kalpataru*), while others deal with certain aspects of Kṛṣṇa-līlā at Vṛndavana. Dāsa-Gosvāmin's another work which deserves some consideration is his *Mukta-carita*, a Sanskrit *kāvya* of campu-type written in prose and occasional verse. Its subject matter is Kṛṣṇa's early sports at Vṛndāvana and its ultimate object is to establish the superiority of Kṛṣṇa's free love for Rādhā over his wedded love for Satyabhāmā. Another small work entitled *Dāna-keli-cintāmaṇi* was composed obviously in the line of Rūpa's *Dāna-keli-kaumudī* portraying an imaginary account of the *dāna-līlā* of Rādhā-Kṛṣṇa. Both these small lyrical works deal with the two erotic episodes relating to Kṛṣṇa's Vṛndavana-līlā. Scholars have not commended Raghunātha's compositions for their superior literary quality. 'The purely poetic merit of these *stavas* cannot be estimated very highly, but their evident erotic mysticism, consisting of deeply emotional spiritualization of sensuous forms, gives them a rich and luscious charm and a sweet ring of passion, which bear a striking testimony to an interesting feature of Bengal Vaiṣṇavism.'<sup>12</sup> Raghunātha-dāsa was and still is respected as one of the Six Vṛndāvana Gosvāmins not so much for his literary achievements as for his rare sacrifice, extraordinary modesty, severe

8. *Viśva-Kośa*. Vol. 16. P. 140.

9. Dr. S. K. De. *Early History of Vaiṣṇava Faith and Movement in Bengal* (Calcutta: Firma KLM, 1961) P. 121.

10. *Viśva-Kośa*. Vol. 16. P. 141.

11. *Early History* P. 108.

12. *Ibid.* P. 122.

asceticism and, above all, for his intense love for the Lord.

### *Raghunātha Bhatta*

Another Vṛndāvana Gosvāmin, who like Dāsa Gosvāmin did not influence the doctrinal trend of the Vaiṣṇavism through any theological or metaphysical contributions, is Raghunātha Bhatta (Bhattacharya). Bhatta Gosvāmin was the son of Tapan Miśra, whom Caitanya had met during his journey in East Bengal in his pre-sannyāsa days. Tapan Miśra, a pious Brahmin, was an inhabitant of Rāmpur, a village on the bank of the river Padmā (now in Bangladesh). Miśra accepted Caitanya as his guru and Caitanya is said to have instructed him about all the subtleties of sādhanā. As advised by Caitanya, the entire Miśra family settled down at Benaras permanently. Raghunātha Bhatta was born in 1505 A.D. (Saka 1427).<sup>13</sup> Nothing much is known about his boyhood days, for most of the biographers of Caitanya are silent about Raghunātha Bhatta. Murāri Gupta mentions him and Kṛṣṇadāsa Kavirāja devotes a small portion of the *Caitanya-Caritāmṛta* to him. (Antya-līlā, chapter 13). It is said that Caitanya frequented Tapan Miśra's residence during his stay at Benaras on his way to and back from Vṛndavana.<sup>14</sup> At that time, Raghunātha was a mere boy, but the charm of Caitanya's magnetic personality and devotional fervour had drawn the boy Raghunātha towards him. He served Caitanya with deep devotion in all possible ways, and it is said that Caitanya bestowed his grace on the boy. Later developments in the boy's life induce us to presume that Caitanya had implanted in him the seed of devotional love which subse-

quently sprouted into a full grown tree with rich foliage. Further, it might be assumed that Raghunātha accepted Caitanya as his guru, though there exists no tangible evidence to establish Raghunātha's direct initiation by Caitanya.

After some years, Raghunātha met the Master at Puri whom he served in different ways. He was an adept in cooking, and himself cooked good dishes with utmost care and devotion for Caitanya. He stayed at Puri for eight months and then returned home at the Master's behest. The Master instructed him to look after his aged parents and also to study *Śrīmad-Bhāgavata*, the Bible of the Vaiṣṇavas. The Master advised him not to enter into wedlock. After four years, on the death of his parents, he again visited Puri and stayed with the Master for eight months. Thereafter, he was directed by Caitanya to join Rūpa and Sanātana at Vṛndavana, where he spent the last days of life. Caitanya had given him a *tulsi* rosary which he cherished and used all through his life. The author Kṛṣṇadāsa Kavirāja tells us that Raghunātha Bhatta had a melodious voice and that he used to recite *Śrīmad-Bhāgavata* devotedly and melodiously.<sup>15</sup> As a matter of fact, he introduced a novel mode of reciting this holy scripture. The narratives of the *Bhāgavata* would become vivid and animated by his new mode of reading. It is said that Rūpa used to take delight in listening to his reading of the scripture. In all his discourses on *Śrīmad-Bhāgavata*, Bhatta Gosvāmin adopted the Caitanyaite line of interpretation. It is well-known that the Master regarded *Śrīmad-Bhāgavata* as the correct and detailed commentary on the *Brahma-sūtra*, the fountain-head of Vedānta Philosophy. Raghunātha Bhatta does not appear to have left any work. His life was not so eventful at least on its surface. Still, he is even now honoured as a great

13. *Viśva-Kosa* Vol. 16 P 141

14. Sri Harekrishna Mukhopadhyaya *Gauḍīya Vaiṣṇava Sādhana* (Bengali) (Calcutta: 1970) P. 117.

15. *Caitanya-Caritāmṛta* Antya-līlā. Chapter 13. P. 577.

Vaiṣṇava apostle and is included in the galaxy of Vṛndavana Gosvāmins on account of certain rare qualities of his radiant personality which are still cherished by each and every Vaiṣṇava devotee. He passed

away probably in the year 1579 A.D. (Saka 1501).<sup>16</sup>

16. *Viśva-Kosa* Vol. 16. P. 142.

## REVIEWS AND NOTICES

**CONTEMPORARY INDIAN PHILOSOPHY:**  
Edited by T. M. P. MAHADEVAN and GRACE E. CAIRNS. Published by the World Press Private Ltd., 37 A College Street, Calcutta-700 073. 1977 Pp xi+311 Rs 50

Here is a significant publication blazing a new trail in the hitherto untrodden terrain of Indian philosophy. The great thinkers of ancient India who attained lofty spiritual heights in their quest for Truth evidently did not consider the temporal process of history worthy of attention. So a philosophy of history finds no place in the monumental systems of thought they erected. It is gratifying to note, therefore, that the volume under review worthily fills the lacuna in our ancient philosophical systems.

Twelve eminent philosophers of the contemporary age, in addition to the two learned editors, have contributed penetrating essays on the march of history, each from his or her own standpoint. All shades of philosophic outlook are brought to bear upon the historical process, and the result is a collection of essays on the philosophy of history from the standpoint of Indian thought, presented to the world of scholarship for the first time.

The advaita Vedantic view of history is ably expounded by Swami Adiswarananda (page 21-58), Dr. T. M. P. Mahadevan (201-232) and Dr. D. M. Dutta (115-134). A renowned Samkarite upholding the absolutistic view, Dr. MAHADEVAN achieves the difficult task of finding a place for the temporal processes in the timeless Reality. Time, he says, is the gateway to Reality which is timeless, and the goal of history is the realization of Mokṣa on a cosmic scale. Historical processes have to be interpreted in this light.

SWAMI ADISWARANANDA expounds the Cyclic Theory against a background of the Christian providential, the Hegelian idealistic, and the

humanistic linear views. According to the Swami, phenomena recur in each of the cycles. There is no such things as progress, but only change (p. 38). As a result of this cyclic view, the Swami declares, man is a mere spectator of history and not a participator. The historical process is an incident in the phenomenal realm which is an expression of God's Līlā or Māyā. The goal of life is Self-realization.

DR. D. M. DUTTA stresses moral values in the historical processes. He uses the Law of Karma in his interpretation of human evolution in the March of History.

Two interpretations of history from the integral standpoint are presented by GRACE E. CAIRNS (p. 20) and PROF. HARIDAS CHAUDHURI. Though called by the same name, the two expositions are very different from each other. The former is based on Sri Aurobindo's philosophy. History on this view, is directed towards the goal of attaining Integral Supramental Consciousness. Man is a free participator in this process. And hence any interpretation in history has necessarily to be psychological. Professor Chaudhuri, on the other hand, has pressed together the diverse theories of evolution, ancient Indian and modern European, and shows that history is a phase of evolution which in its turn is a facet of the philosophy of the whole cosmos. He also demonstrates that all interpretations of history are matters of insight and of creative imagination and hence subjective.

A study of history on the basis of a philosophy of values is attempted by PROFESSOR A. G. JAVADEKAR (p.187-200). History is a process of realization of eternal values, and would ultimately point to something greater and beyond the values themselves, namely Truth which is the bedrock of all values.

PROF. J. N. MOHANTY (p. 251-262) analyses those aspects of Indian thought which made it impossible for our philosophers to concern

themselves with history. On the basis of this analysis, he determines the conditions necessary and sufficient for generating a genuine Philosophy of History.

PROF. N. A. NIKAM's essay (p. 265-277) is an elucidation of the metaphysics of the idea of history. History deals with the past and is a regressive perspective of time. A Philosophy of History according to him is essentially a philosophy of *action* and not of thought.

'Social Revolution' is the central theme of PROF. KALIDAS BHATTĀCHARYA (p. 59-92). This may seem to be a deviation from the main theme of the book, but it is justified. The significance of social revolution and progress as expounded by Hegel and Marx are given, and it is contended by the Professor that Sāṃkhya, Yoga and Tantra too are concerned with revolution. True it is they speak of revolution in the spiritual realm. Why not link this with revolution in the mundane social realm? The Professor shows what happens when this linking is done.

The volume under review was ostensibly meant to confine itself to the philosophical consideration of history. Yet, other aspects of history have not been ignored. Facts of history presented by PROF. DHIRENDRA SHARMA (p. 295-311) are shocking and revealing. His reflections thereon are galvanizing. And his bold declaration (imitating Marx) that it is more important to change history than to write it or analyse it (p. 308) leaves us with a sense of disappointment.

PROF. BIMAL KRISHNA MATILAL (p. 233-247) surprises us by his declaration that the application of the metaphysical systems to the interpretation of history is neither interesting nor important (p. 236). Still he employs the ideas of Karma and Samsāra to give his own interpretation.

PROF. V. V. DESHPANDE (p. 135-166) goes beyond the pale of the Philosophy of History and discusses the Itihāsa-Purāṇa literature of our land and the need for taking them to the doors of our villagers. PROF. B. G. GOKHALE (p. 147-185) advocates, in his essay, the writing of Indian history on a new pattern suggested by him.

There are three separate groups of essays in this marvellous book. The first is concerned with purely philosophical aspects of history comprising the contributions of the Editors, Swami Adiswarananda, Professors Haridas Chaudhuri, D. M. Dutta, A. G. Javadekar, J. N. Mohanty and N. A. Nikam. The second

group is of a semi-philosophical nature including the writings of Professors Kalidas Bhattacharya, B. K. Matilal and Dharendra Sharma. The third group includes the purely historical, mostly non-philosophical expositions of Professors V. V. Deshpande, B. G. Gokhale, and S. K. Saksena. Each group presents marvellously fresh and invigorating ideas worth deep consideration by our scholars. However, taking the main purpose of the Editors into consideration, the first group deserves special attention. The reviewer feels that this dominant group has laid the philosophic foundations, well and truly, for an interpretation of the meaning, purpose and goal of human history. The superstructure, similar to what Hegel has achieved, has to be erected. The basic or foundational concepts of Indian philosophy have to be employed to interpret the history of India, and other countries of the world. The reviewer hopes that the learned Editors would launch on this task and give us a companion volume to the one under review.

This book, as a significant and valuable addition to the extant literature on the Philosophy of History, should be in the hands of all student and teachers of philosophy in our country. But for this a cheaper edition will have to be brought out.

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MYTH, SYMBOL AND LANGUAGE (*A Vivekananda Perspective*). BY 'ANANDA Rama-krishna Mission Seva Pratisthan, Calcutta-700 029 1980 Pp 204.

Myth is not a fable or fiction. It is the expression of an experience, sacred, exemplary and significant, as Mircea Eliade understands it. By knowing the myth, one knows the origin of things. Symbol, on the other hand, participates in Reality in a cognizable fashion. Paul Tillich's analogy of the national flag is instructive in the study of symbology. Language is as it were the hand of the mind, a vehicle of ideas. It is the best show man puts on. It is the expression of the divinity in man; a gift of God. Words take us from the myth-making phase of human mentality to the state of logical thought and conception of facts.

The author of the long 'essay' under review, a monk of the Ramakrishna Order, develops a

philosophy of language found in the writings of Swami Vivekananda in the light of the global researches in the field. He tries to show the significance of the statements of the great prophet-philosopher for a proper understanding of Indian religion and culture. For Swami Vivekananda the entire universe is a symbol and God is the essence behind. According to him neither symbol nor language could be created. The *nāma-rūpa* as he calls them, are inseparable and beginningless like the Veda. He upholds the Śabda-Brahman theory of language which is neither the result of convention nor of a contract. Language and Reality are one.

If myths, symbols and language are studied in the proper perspective (and the author chooses for his perspective the writings of Swami Vivekananda), some apparent contradictions could be resolved. If we keep in view the fundamental thesis of Swamiji that there is difference only of degree between the language of a philosopher and the utterance of a baby we shall resolve the contradictions of the texts—sacred or secular. Swami Vivekananda strongly holds that all mythologies contain nuggets of truth and all polished phrases contain trash. There is relativity of truth on phenomenal plane.

The book is an important contribution to the study of the philosophy of language. But the running exposition of the theme without division into chapters creates difficulties to a common reader. The presentation could be more readable if classified and edited by some academician or by the author himself.

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YOGA NIDRA: BY SWAMI SATYANANDA SARASWATI. Bihar School of Yoga, Monghyr. Bihar 811 201. 1982 Pp. 284 Rs. 40.

'That Nidra which is not a form of Prakṛiti but is the manifested form of Puruṣa' (*Yogatārāvali*, 26). The theme of this book is this special kind of sleep which is between the normal state of awareness and regular sleep. Drawing upon his own experience and his knowledge of the concerned techniques in the Yoga Sastra, Swamiji develops a special application of the principle of *yoga-nidra*, not only for spiritual purposes but also for tackling problems of mental health, tension, vital violence etc.

In this state of dynamic sleep there is no

pull of inertia and tamas; the consciousness is freed from external compulsions and the door is opened to the subliminal dimensions of the being. By special methods this state can be utilized 'to develop the memory, increase knowledge and creativity or transform one's nature (p. 2)'. The author calls it an aspect of Pratyahara; knowledge in this state is obtained without sensory medium. He mentions: 'In modern psychology, this has been termed the "hypnagogic state" but I prefer to call it the "hypnayogic state".'

There is a detailed account of the step-by-step processes that are employed by Swamiji and the results that have been obtained. In brief, there are seven steps: making the resolve of what one wants to do or be; rotation of consciousness from limb to limb or object to object as directed by the instructor; awareness of breath; relaxation of feelings and sensations which are awakened and neutralized with their opposites; visualization of images named by the instructor; repetition of the resolve, *sankalpa*; gradually bringing back the mind from the sleep to normal awareness.

It is interesting to read that 'Wolfgang von Goethe used the inspirations and intuitions from this state to solve problems arising in his work. In dreams occurring in this state, Kekule realized the circular molecular structure of benzene; Nobel laureate Niels Bohr saw the planetary structure of the atom, and Einstein accelerated his awareness to the speed of light in the famous "thought experiments" which led to the theory of relativity.' (P. 8)

This treatment opens up immense possibilities which it would be worthwhile to pursue. There is a practice in some parts of our country of reading out from some holy texts like the Gita or Ramayana while putting a child to sleep and even after the child goes to sleep. It helps to form the right *samskāras*, as the consciousness goes on absorbing the vibrations of the reading. Obviously the principle is the same as of *yoga-nidra*.

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#### SANSKRIT—ENGLISH

SRIMAD BHAGAVATA VOL I (*Skandhas* 1—4): TRANSLATED BY SWAMI TAPASYANANDA. Published by Sri Ramakrishna Math, Mylapore, Madras 600 004, 1980. Pp. XLVI + 455. Rs. 100,

*Śrīmad Bhāgavatam* occupies a unique position among the Purāṇas. It is not only the fount of the Bhakti doctrine but is also the quintessence of Vedānta, *sarvavedāntasāram*. By being conversant with the teachings of *Śrīmad Bhāgavatam*, one practically gets hold of all the essential teachings of Indian spiritual tradition. Swami Tapasyanandaji is, therefore, to be congratulated for making this priceless treasure available in English translation, and he deserves unstinted praise for taking upon himself this arduous and colossal task; which he hopes to complete in four volumes, of which the first one has just come out in print.

The translator has given precedence to readability over meticulous accuracy in his translation, as he himself has stated in the preface. Though he modestly disclaims Sanskrit scholarship, his work shows a thorough grasp of the essential spirit of the text, and he has also been successful in conveying it through a very lucid and free rendering. But in some places, the translation may appear misleading. For instance, the translation of verse 5 in Chapter 15 of the 1st Skandha (p. 65) as 'betrayed by Hari, whom I took to be a friend' may convey the wrong impression that Arjuna, who utters this verse, realizes after the demise of Krishna that the latter was not a friend to him in the true sense of the term, though he had taken him to be so. In fact what is conveyed by the word *vañcita* in this verse is repeated by the word *rahita* in verse 20 and the meaning in both cases is 'bereft of' or 'without'. Without his friend Śrī Krishna, Arjuna feels absolutely helpless and powerless, being bereft of his only source of power, and this he conveys through his long lamentation. Similarly the translation of *sātvatām patih* in verse 14 of Chapter II (p. 7) as 'the master of all devotees' and again of *sātvatapungave* in verse 32 of Chapter IX (p. 41) as 'a noble scion of the Yadu clan' may lead to some confusion, as in both cases the meaning is the same. The translator, however, has done well in taking

liberties here and there to make the meaning more explicit to which no exception should be taken. For instance, he translates *prakṛtimupeyūṣi* as 'assumed his power of Yogamāyā', and *ratirastu me anavadyā* as 'unfailing and absolute devotion, which seeks not liberation even'. In such places as the above two instances, too literal a translation would not have conveyed the true sense, and the translator has done well in indulging in a little explanation over and above his translation.

Swami Tapasyanandaji has been highly successful in conveying the message of the *Bhāgavata* to the English-reading public by taking recourse to this method of free translation. He has also added, at the outset a very valuable, long general introduction, covering nearly 30 pages, where in eight sections he deals with numerous topics, such as the origin of the Purāṇas and the place of the *Bhāgavata* among them, the philosophical outlook of the *Bhāgavata*, problems of modern readers and others. Swami Tapasyanandaji has rendered a unique service through his illuminating presentation of the real nature of the Purāṇas, which should be read over and over again by the present-day readers 'who have been influenced by the modern scientific view of nature, universe and man'. He reminds us that 'the Purāṇas are not at all to be read as history and geography, nor are they to be regarded as fiction. They belong to an order different from both history and fiction. The Purāṇas are the upthrow of a people's mind struggling to express their quest for a meaning for a life and their findings in this respect' (p. XIV).

Both the printing and get-up are excellent, and there is no doubt that this new edition of *Śrīmad Bhāgavata* will find an honourable place in every library, public and private.

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## NEWS AND REPORTS

### MAYAVATI CHARITABLE HOSPITAL

Report for April 1982 to March 1983

Advaita Ashrama, Mayavati, was started on 19 March 1899 under the inspiration of Swami

Vivekananda in the Kumaon Hills of the Himalayas. In 1903, a small dispensary was started by the Ashrama in response to the dire need of the local villagers in sickness. Since that time the dispensary has developed into a fairly well-equipped, small rural hospital. The

hospital stands within the precincts of the Ashrama, and is under the charge of a monastic member. A resident allopathic doctor treats the patients with the help of his assistants, and earnest efforts are made to maintain a high standard of efficiency in service. Moreover, all patients receive prompt and sympathetic treatment completely free of charge.

The hospital has 25 beds in the indoor department, but sometimes arrangements have to be made for more. There is also a small operation theatre. A dental chair and a pathological department provide additional help in the treatment of patients. The total number of patients treated during the year in the Indoor Department was 407, of which 321 were cured and discharged, 63 were relieved, 11 were discharged otherwise or left and 12 died. In the Outdoor Department, the total number of patients treated was 17,910, of which 5,386 were new and 12,524 were repeated cases.

*Our present immediate needs* (1) Providing fresh lockers to all the (25) beds in the Indoor Department. Rs 5,000. (2) Providing new mattresses, bed sheets, bed covers, and woollen blankets for all the beds Rs. 10,000. (3) Construction of a Dormitory for the attendants of patients. Rs 50,000 (4) Creation of a Permanent Fund for the purchase of medicines (To be invested in Long Term Fixed Deposit in a Scheduled Bank and interest only to be used for this purpose). Rs 5,00,000 Cheques and drafts may be drawn in favour of *Mayavati Charitable Hospital* and sent to the President, Mayavati Charitable Hospital, P O Mayavati, via Lohaghat, Dist Pithoragarh (U P.). 262-524, India.

## OBITUARY

With deep sorrow we have to announce the passing away of Swami Budhananda, Secretary, Ramakrishna Mission, New Delhi Branch on 11th June 1983 at 6 p.m. at the Ramakrishna Mission Seva Pratishthan, Calcutta. A few days ago he went to Belur Math, and became indisposed there with various ailments. He was admitted to the Seva Pratishthan where his condition took a serious turn following a cerebral stroke from which he never regained. The

immediate cause of death was cardio-respiratory failure in a case of cerebral haemorrhage. He was 66.

Born in 1917 in East Bengal. (now Bangladesh), the Swami was known in his pre-monastic life as Bhavan Prasad Dutta. He completed his graduation in 1939 from Dacca University and studied up to the final M. A. course without appearing for the examination. He joined the Order in 1944 at the Madras Math Centre and worked there till 1959 in various capacities, including the editorship of *Vedanta Kesari*. An initiated disciple of Swami Virajananda Maharaj, the Swami received sannyasa from Swami Sankarananda Maharaj in 1954. He was posted by the Headquarters to our Ramakrishna-Vivekananda Centre in New York, U.S.A. as Assistant Minister, in 1959 to preach Vedanta. He successfully conducted the work there and also in San Francisco and Hollywood Centres, for about seven years in all. He returned to India in 1966, and took up the responsibility of the Head of the Chandigarh Centre. In 1968 he came to Mayavati as the Joint Editor of *Prabuddha Bharata*, and in 1969 he was appointed President of Advaita Ashrama, Mayavati, as well as Editor of *Prabuddha Bharata*. In 1976 he was appointed Head of the Delhi Centre, as its Secretary, where he continued till the last.

Scholarly and contemplative by nature, the Swami has to his credit a number of books and articles, both in English and Bengali. *The Mind and Its Control, Can One be Scientific and yet Spiritual, The Saving Challenge of Religion* etc. are a few of his books that have gained admiration of both spiritual seekers and modern rational minds. His meticulous attention to details and profound erudition are the two of the distinctive features of his writings. His oratorical powers and organizing faculty are well proved by the grand success of the recent youth convention organized by him at New Delhi. Somewhat reserved, yet warm and affectionate, the Swami was respected and loved by all. His demise has created a void in the Ramakrishna-Vivekananda movement, and the Order has been deprived of the services of a fine monk. May his soul rest in peace!



## NOTES AND COMMENTS

### *The Spirit of Research*

Science in the true sense of the term is a way of life—the true way of life in the empirical world. It is not a mere technique or special activity carried out in a laboratory. True science is inseparable from the life of the scientist. A true scientist is one who *lives* science, who has converted his *whole* life into the pursuit of empirical truth.

The desire to know is there in all people ; curiosity is there even in monkeys. It is only when this natural urge to know is liberated from pleasure-seeking biological life and intensified beyond a certain threshold into an all absorbing search for a direct experience of true empirical reality does it become the discipline of science. The scientific search for reality is called research. This seeking is an expression of the evolutionary urge of the soul to transcend its limitations and attain higher states of existence, knowledge and happiness. Research may be linked to technology and economic prosperity, but its real motive power lies deep down in the consciousness of the scientist. It is the urge to evolve, to transcend, that constitutes the true spirit of research. In his inspiring autobiography *My Life With the Microbes* Dr. Selman Waksman, the discoverer of Streptomycin, quotes the words of his teacher T. B. Robertson on the spirit of research as follows. 'I earnestly hope that every student of science will become an ardent devotee of research and exponent of the spirit of research, for the spirit of research is that spirit which inquires for the purpose of making things better than they are, and which urges humanity toward higher purposes and more worthy achievements in every aspect of our lives. What, after all, is really worth doing in this life? If our object be merely to keep things going as they are, then, truly all the activities of mankind become virtually nothing more than house-keeping on a world-wide scale. We would grow food today that we might eat tomorrow, make clothes solely in order to wear them out, pass our lives in absolute subservience to our animal needs, earn merely what we spend and for spending's sake.'

There are hundreds of academic and industrial research institutes all over India, and thousands of men and women are working in them. But very few of these scientists are inspired by the true spirit of research. The vast majority of them have been pushed into the field of research either by the forces of economic necessity or by that all-pervasive tendency of educated Indians to seek cushy jobs. This explains why, in spite of enormous financial investment in science, important original contributions to its advancement have rarely been made in this country.

In this context an observation made by Prof. K. L. Chopra, a Bhatnagar Memorial Award winner, published in the *Science Reporter* of May 1977, deserves the consideration of all thoughtful Indians. 'Poor quality of scientific work in India has only a small connection with the lack of facilities. Primarily it is due to the lack of a scientific and technological culture, proper attitude, dedication and commitment on the part of the scientists working as a group... Research in science should be undertaken by only those who have the commitment and devotion of a deeply religious man.'

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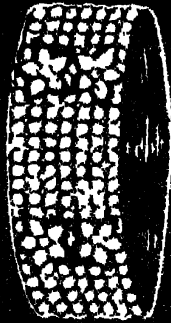
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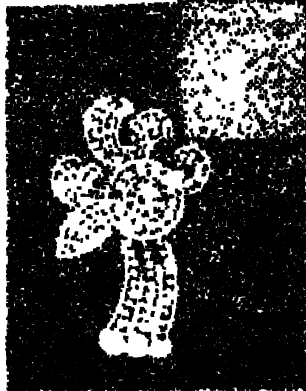
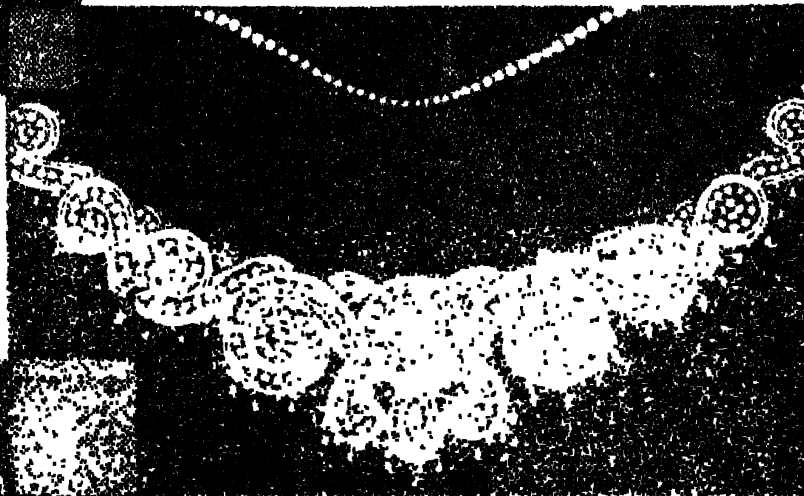
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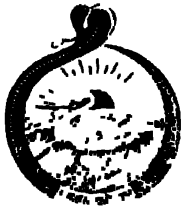
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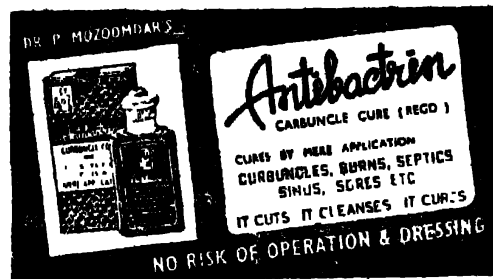
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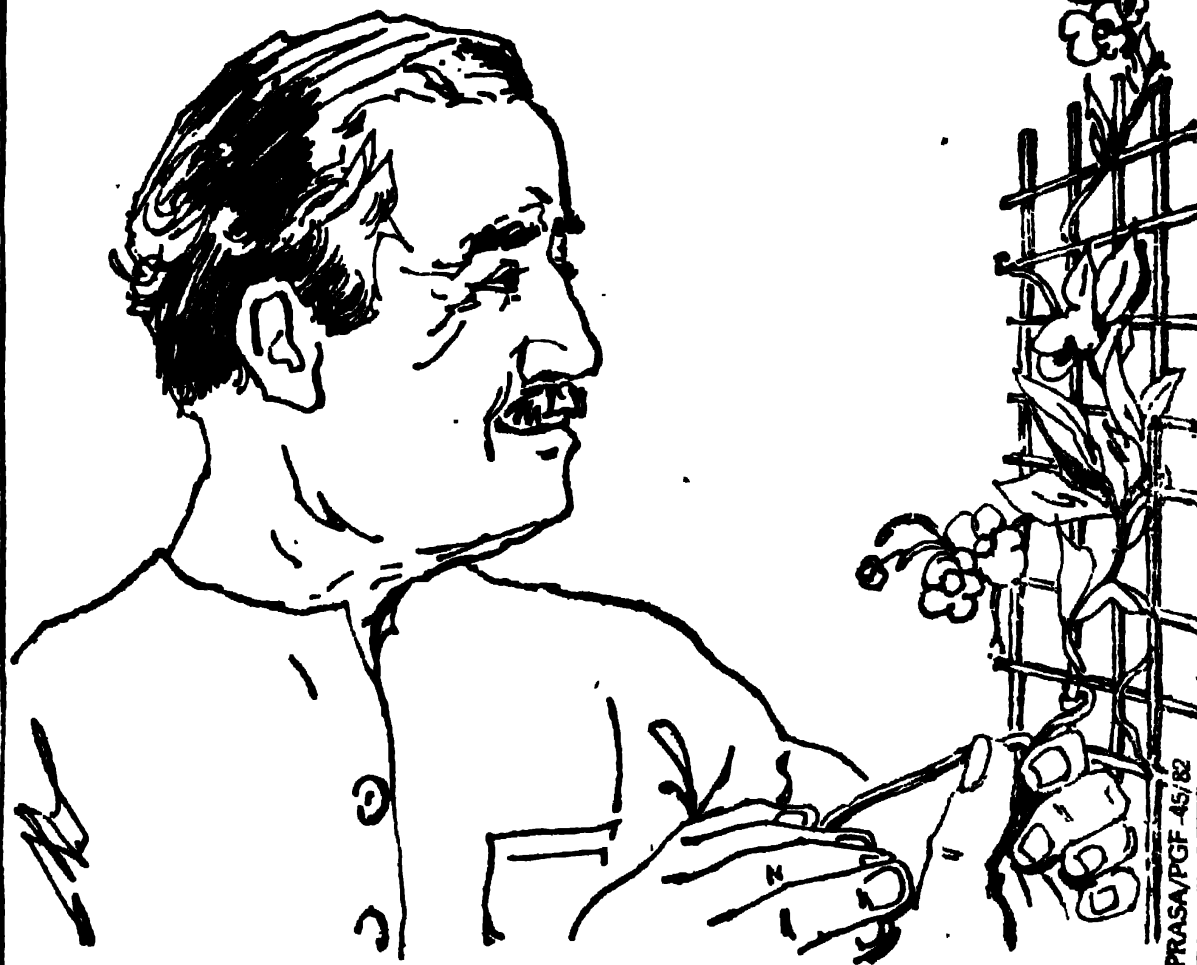
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*Rg-Veda 10 90 11*

2 His mouth became the Brāhmaṇa his arms became the Kṣatriya, his thighs became the Vaiśya ; the Śūdra was born from his feet.<sup>3</sup>

*Rg-Veda 10 90.12*

3. The moon was born from his mind ; the sun was born from his eye ; Indra and Agni were born from his mouth, Vāyu from his breath.

*Rg-Veda 10 90 13.*

4. From his navel came the atmosphere, from his head the sky was produced, the earth from his feet, the quarters of space from his ear. Thus they fashioned the world.

*Rg-Veda 10 90 14*

1. by the devas who are, according to Sāyaṇa, manifestations of the Prāṇa-Śakti of the Primal Puruṣa.

2. According to Sāyaṇa, the Sacrifice was a mental one, and so the dividing of Puruṣa does not mean an actual cutting up but a form of mental classification.

3. In the whole of *Rg-Veda* the four castes are directly mentioned only in this stanza.

## ABOUT THIS NUMBER

Some salient aspects of sacrifice in the Vedic period are dealt with in this month's EDITORIAL.

In the first instalment of GIRISH CHANDRA GHOSH Swami Chetanananda, head of the Vedanta Society of St. Louis, gives a vibrant account of the early life of the great Bengali writer and actor Girish Chandra Ghosh.

In the second instalment of AESTHETICS IN RAMANUJA'S PHILOSOPHY Prof. S. S. Raghavachar, former head of the department of philosophy in Mysore University, discusses the secular and sacred aspects of art and the place of the theory of rasa in Viśiṣṭādvaita.

This month's Forum for Inter-religious Understanding presents an insightful paper on PRAYER IN A CHRISTIAN CONTEXT by Dr

Beatrice Bruteau who is the Director of Philosopher's Exchange, Winston-Salem and also lectures in the university. The central idea of this strikingly original thesis is that prayer is a two-way movement taking place in two stages, which the author calls 'insight' and 'manifestation' respectively. The first is a process of interiorization by which the soul draws nearer to God; the second manifests the divine light acquired by the soul in its own life and in loving service to others. Together, these two movements constitute the essence of Christian prayer.

Prof. Ranjit Kumar Acharjee of Ramakrishna Maha Vidyalaya, Kailashahat, North Tripura, has drawn an authentic profile of two of the less well-known founders of Bengal Vaisnavism in his article TWO VRNDAVANA GOSVAMINS.

## MEDITATION AND SACRIFICE—III

(EDITORIAL)

### *Yajña as the yoga of Vedic Age*

Spiritual life is conscious life. In fact, spiritual life is nothing but a struggle for higher consciousness, and this is what distinguishes it from ethical life and ordinary conventional religious life. The central process in spiritual life is the transformation of human consciousness. All spiritual disciplines, all yogas, are special techniques which transform the unconscious into the conscious and the conscious into the superconscious. This was what *yajña* did for the Vedic man. *Yajña* was the yoga of the Vedic Age. In the hands of unworthy people any spiritual endeavour may undergo degeneration. As yoga was misused

for the acquisition of occult powers, as the Tantras were misused for the enjoyment of sense pleasure, so too *yajña* was in later years degraded by ignorant people into a ritual for the attainment of heaven. But during the early Vedic period it served primarily as a spiritual discipline, a yoga, a technique for the transformation of consciousness.

In order to know how *yajña* brings about the transformation of consciousness we have to understand three principles on which it is based: ritualism, symbolism and the connection between thought and action.

Vedic *yajña* was centred on the external fire ritual performed every day in every

home. It was a simple rite of offering milk or ghee or cakes into an altar containing one or three or five fires. The whole life was regarded as a *yajña*, and the ritual was only meant to serve as an aid in the concentration of mental energies and in understanding the nature of the universe. The fire altar acted as a physical frame of reference for the working out of certain mental concepts. It was a kind of *maṇḍala* or *yantra*. In his autobiographical work the great psychoanalyst Dr. Jung mentions how he came to an understanding of *maṇḍalas*.<sup>1</sup> In his own personal life he used to visualize his mind as a circle and, whenever a conflict or tension arose, he would diagram it as a projection or distortion of the circle. In due course he found that this diagrammatization of his mental life had assumed a complex symmetric pattern which, as he later on discovered to his astonishment, had a striking resemblance to the Chinese and Tibetan *maṇḍalas*. A *maṇḍala* is thus an externalization of a person's intuitive understanding either about his own psyche or about the nature of the universe.<sup>2</sup> A *yantra* is a specific type of *maṇḍala* associated with a deity—a pattern of the deity's power-structure.

The Vedic altar was a three-dimensional *maṇḍala* or *yantra*. It was the external projection of a mental construct or paradigm of Reality, which the ṛṣi had developed through deep contemplation. The inner mental construct was called *vidyā* and the external physical construct was called *yajña* (In later upanishadic literature *yajña* came to be designated *avidyā*<sup>3</sup>). The ex-

ternal ritual was only an acting out and reinforcement of the inner meditation. By externalizing our inner thoughts we can study and control our mental life and our relationship with the world around us more easily. The fire altar served the same purpose to the Vedic ṛṣi—it enabled him to anchor his life in the real world, to concentrate his mind and energies, and to orientate himself to life and reality. Above all, it served to remind him of the unity and dynamism of life—that all life is one, that the entire universe is alive as one organism throbbing with divinity, that life is a constantly self-renewing steady-state system which every living being has to maintain through constant giving up and self-sacrifice.

In fact, the Vedic altar was the concretization of Vedic meditation. The real power lay in meditation, not in the external ritual—in the mind of the ṛṣi, not in the altar.

The second principle connected with *yajña* is symbolism. The most widely used symbols of the Vedic period are Sūrya (Sun) and Agni (Fire). In understanding the relation between these two and their symbolism lies the key to understanding the spiritual meaning of the entire Vedas. There are several passages in the *R̥g-Veda* which describe Agni as a power residing in all human beings. It is referred to as Vaiśvānara ('belonging to all men') and Jātavedas ('all-knowing'). It is said to be located in the heart where the seer offers his hymn as an oblation to Agni.<sup>4</sup> Seated in the heart, Agni inspires mystic mantras<sup>5</sup>. Agni is the 'one ocean, the

1. Carl G. Jung. *Memories, Dreams, Reflection* (London: Collins and Routledge and Kegan Paul, 1963).

2. When a schoolboy draws a triangle in order to study the Pythagorean Theorem, he is making a most elementary form of *maṇḍala*.

3. Here *a-vidyā* does not mean 'ignorance' but 'not-*vidyā*', that is, something *different from* meditation.

4. आ ते अग्न ऋचा हविर्हृदा तष्टं भ्रामसि ।

*R̥g-Veda* 6.16.47

5. विदन्तीमन्न नरो घियंघा हृदा यत् तष्टान्

मन्त्राँ अशंसन् ।

*R̥g-Veda* 1.67.2.

source of riches, shines forth from our hearts<sup>6</sup>. These passages clearly indicate that in the Vedas Agni means not the external fire, but the power of intuition and will in man. It is the symbol of the power of the *Jīvātman*, the individual Self, which the Tantras call *kundalini*.

The Sun, *Sūrya*, is the symbol of spiritual illumination, the supreme Reality, the Cosmic Self,<sup>7</sup> the Primordial *Puruṣa*, the *Hiraṇyagarbha*, the *Prajāpati*, the Lord of all beings. Agni is the revealer, the means; *Sūrya* is the revealed, the goal. When Agni is called the 'priest, the divine sacrificer'<sup>8</sup> or the 'primary mouth of gods'<sup>9</sup>, and when the vedic sage prays to him for guidance along the right path<sup>10</sup>, what is implied is that the inner Self is the connecting link between man and God. Agni is only a special manifestation of *Sūrya*, and in the *Śatapatha-Brahmaṇa* the two are identified. It is this identity that the Upanisads explicitly state as the identity of the individual Self and the Supreme Self.

Religious symbols are not mere signs but are the *sanskāras*, dynamic impressions, of divine Reality produced in the minds of illumined sages. Just as the light of the sun produces the rainbow in the pure white cloud, so the light of the Divine gives rise to symbols in the purified minds of rsis. When reactivated, these symbols produce

great changes in the mind and recreate the original experience of the ṛṣi—just as the seven colours of the rainbow can be reconstituted back into the pure white radiance of the sun. The purpose of both meditation and ritual is to reactivate the archetypal symbols. This was what *yajña* did for the Vedic man.

The third point in understanding the spiritual significance of *yajña* is the connection between meditation and work. How do thoughts influence action, and how do actions influence thoughts? What is the connecting link between consciousness and activity? This is an important question for a spiritual aspirant, for without finding an answer to it he cannot resolve the conflict between meditation and karma yoga.<sup>11</sup> But for this it is necessary to study in detail the fundamental psychological processes which interlink thought and action. This is beyond the scope of the present discussion but, considering its importance, will be dealt with in a subsequent editorial.

#### *How yajña evolved into upāsana (meditation)*

Few people are aware of the fact that Vedantic meditation known as *upāsana* evolved out of the Vedic *yajña*. During the early Vedic period the two constituted one single discipline, *yajñopāsana*. Gradually *upāsana* became *angāvabaddha*, that is, distinct from but dependent on the external sacrifice. By the time the *Brahmaṇa* and *Āraṇyaka* portions of the Vedas were composed, the external rite had been internalized and meditation had become a mental sacrifice, *mānasa-yajña*. During the period of the Upanisads *upāsana* became a completely independent discipline using its own symbols and

6. एकः समुद्रो धरुणो रयीणामस्मद् हृदो

भूरिजन्मा विचष्टे ।

*Rg-Veda* 10.5.1

7. सूर्य आत्मा जगतस्तस्थुषश्च ।

*Rg-Veda* 1.115.1

8. अग्निमीळे पुरोहितं यज्ञस्य देवमृत्विजं ।

*Rg-Veda* 1.1.1.

9. अग्निर्मुखं प्रथमो देवतानां ।

*Āitareya-Brahmaṇa* 1.4.8

10. अग्ने नय सुपथा राये ।

*Rg-Veda* 1.189.1; *Isāvāsya-Upaniṣad* 18.

11. This is one of the basic conflicts of Arjuna in the Gita.

techniques. This transformation of *yajña* into *upāsana* had a profound effect on the development of religious life in India, and some of the great philosophical concepts regarding the nature of Reality came out of it.

The earliest form of *yajña* was the offering of milk or ghee into a single domestic fire every day. This in due course developed into the cult of the *treta*, the three fires, called *daksina*, *āhavanīya* and *gārhapatya*. Oblations for one's forefathers were offered in the first fire and oblations for the gods in the second fire. These oblations were supposed to lead the soul to the path of manes (*pitryāna*) and the path of gods (*devayāna*) respectively. The third fire was meant to receive oblations without any motive. It symbolized the earliest form of Karma Yoga or selfless work, and gave rise to the concept of *mukti*, liberation from transmigratory existence as a direct path.

From the cult of the three fires developed several meditations. One was the *upakosala-vidyā* which led to identification of *prāṇa*, *kam* (bliss) and *kham* (space) with Brahman.<sup>12</sup> Another was the three-stage meditation taught by Uddālaka Āruṇi to his son Śvetaketu. In the first stage the origin of mind, *Prāṇa* and speech is traced to the three elements earth, water and fire; in the second stage these elements are traced to their common source, *sat* or pure being; in the third stage the individual soul is identified with *sat* through the famous equation *tat tvam asi*.<sup>13</sup> Meditations on the three fires also led to important discoveries like the doctrine of the three worlds (*bhūh*, *bhuvah*, *suvah*), the doctrines of the three states (waking, dream and deep sleep), the three parts of cognition (knower, knowledge and the object), etc. Mystic and

psychic truths and experiences, like those connected with the three channels of *idā*, *pingalā* and *suṣumnā*, also evolved out of the cult of the three fires.<sup>14</sup>

Later on two more fires—*āvasathya* and *sabhya*—were added to the three fires, and thus developed the cult of the Five Fires which became the standard form of fire-sacrifice (*agnihotra*) during the later Vedic period. From this fire cult developed several meditations and concepts. One of the most well known of these meditations is the *pañcāgnividyā* in which the heaven, the cloud, the earth, man and woman are regarded as five fires which represent the five stages through which the soul passes before it is reborn. Important psychological concepts like the five *kośas* or sheaths (the material, vital, mental, intellectual and blissful) of the soul, the five sense organs as powers of mind, the five vital airs and their control through *Prāṇāyāma* and other important principles of yoga are all products of the *pañcāgnividyā*.

The development of *upāsana*, which began as an internalization of the fire-sacrifice, continued in the post-Vedic period. Two important changes took place during this period. One was the introduction of the concept of self-surrender. The three parts of a Vedic sacrifice were the material things offered (*dravya*), the deity (*devatā*), and the act of giving (*tyāga*) which was mostly done as an obligatory duty.<sup>15</sup> In the *upāsana* of the post-Vedic period the Self (Atman) was substituted for *dravya*, and *tyāga* gave way to *samarpana* or surrender. As a result, *upāsana* became an act of self-surrender. Self-surrender developed into *bhajana*, loving service to the

14. It was perhaps some such mystic knowledge that the boy Naciketā sought as his second boon in the *Kathopanishad* 1.13-17.

15. द्रव्यं देवता त्यागः ।

*Kūṭyāyana Śrauta Sūtra* 1.2.12,

12. Cf. *Chāndogya-Upaniṣad* 4.10.4

13. Cf. *Chāndogya-Upaniṣad* 6.5.4 — 6.8.8,

Lord, in the Bhakti movement of the Middle Ages.<sup>16</sup> The next significant change took place several hundred years later in modern times when Swami Vivekananda gave a new turn to Hindu religious life by linking individual spiritual practice to service (*sevana*) of humanity. The transformation of *yajana* (*yajña*) into *bhajana* and of the latter into *sevana* has had its parallel effect in the form and content of *upāsana*.

In the meantime, under the influence of Patañjali's Yoga, *upāsana* was undergoing a second type of change to which we now turn for a detailed study.

### *Difference between Vedic meditation and post-Vedic meditation*

When we study meditation in the Vedas<sup>17</sup> we find that it differs from the prevalent notions regarding meditation in three ways.

1. *Emphasis on awakening of intuition rather than on suppression of thoughts.* Every thought has behind it two powers: the power to convey meaning known in the Vedas as *vāk*, and the power of will known in the Vedas as *kratu*. Both these powers have their source in the *dhī* (or higher *buddhī*), the intuitive faculty located in the heart.<sup>18</sup> When *dhī* is awakened, thoughts acquire great power and luminosity

and reveal subtle or hidden truths. The Vedic seers knew this, and so everywhere in the Vedas we find prayers for the awakening of the *dhī* (like the celebrated Gāyatrī) and for the union of thoughts to *dhī*. This was what yoga meant to the Vedic ṛṣi—the 'yoking' of thoughts to *dhī* and the deployment of thoughts to understand the true nature of life and reality.<sup>19</sup>

In striking contrast, the emphasis in Patañjali's Yoga is on the control or suppression of thoughts, *citta-vṛtti nirodhaḥ*. Of course, yogic control is a fully conscious self-directed process, but for this some prior awakening, gained through intense prayer or self-analysis or Karma Yoga, is necessary. When suppression of thoughts is attempted with an unawakened impure mind in a mechanical way, it becomes what psychologists call 'repression', and much mental energy is wasted. People try to suppress thoughts because of the mistaken notion that all thoughts are evil and are obstacles to spiritual realization. Thoughts cause distraction, conflict and suffering only when they are left to the mercies of lower impulses without the light and guidance of an awakened *dhī*. When *dhī* awakens, it takes charge of the whole mental life, frees thoughts from the hold of instincts, brings them under its control, and endows them with power and luminosity. Instead of straining every nerve in the futile attempt to suppress thoughts, if spiritual aspirants spent at least a fraction of their time and energy in awakening the *dhī* first through intense prayer and selfless karma yoga, meditative life would not appear so difficult and frustrating as it does to many of them.

16. Derived from the root *bhaj*—to divide share, serve, the original use of the word *bhajana* in the *Rg-Veda* is not much different from that of *yajña* cf. महन्ते विष्णो मुमर्ति भजामहे ।

*Rg-Veda* 1.156.3

17. For an insightful study of Vedic meditation see, Jeanne Miller, *The Vedas* (London: Rider and Company; also, New Delhi: B.I. Publications, 1974).

18. Cf. 'Varuṇa has implanted *kratu* in the heart'.

हृत्सु क्रतु वरुणो . . . अदधात् ।

*Rg-Veda* 5.85.2.

19. Cf. 'Seers, who have known the Great Seer, unite their minds to *dhī*'.

युजते मन उत युजते धियो विप्रा

विप्रस्य बृहतो विपश्चितः ।

*Rg-Veda* 5.81.1.

2. *Integration of personality.* One of the most obvious characteristics of post-Vedic spirituality is the compartmentalization of spiritual endeavour into Jñāna, Bhakti, Yoga and Karma each of which gives importance to the cultivation of one of the three faculties of reason, feeling and will. Following only one path neglecting the others leads to a lop-sided development of personality. On the contrary, spiritual life in the Vedic period was holistic which allowed the full development of all the faculties. There was no division of it into Jñāna, Bhakti, etc., for an individual's entire life was an undivided consecration and sacrifice to the Divine.

3. *Openness to Reality at all levels.* The goal of Vedic man's life was the attainment of harmony with *ṛtam*, the cosmic order. Life was treated as an integral whole without any distinction between the sacred and the secular, the individual and the cosmic, the inner and the outer. Man encountered the Divine at all times everywhere, and every activity was a sacrifice to the Divine. The purpose of meditation was to establish as many points of contact with the divine Reality as possible. Through meditation the Vedic man learnt how to open up every part of his personality—the physical, vital, mental and the superconscious—to the light and power of the Divine. Meditation was essentially a technique for the expansion of consciousness and for the experience of divine joy at all levels. It was not an exclusive activity but an integral part of the everyday life of the common man.

This openness to experience, expansion of consciousness and multidimensional contact with Reality which characterized Vedic meditation was lost during the post-Vedic period. Meditation got progressively divorced from everyday life, and became a specialized activity needing withdrawal from practical life, chiefly meant for ascetics and monks.

With the advancement of science and technology the human situation has been rapidly changing in modern times. On the one hand, the discoveries of science and psychology have opened up hitherto unknown dimensions of Reality and, on the other hand, industrialization, wars and socio-political changes have created problems of disbelief, discontentment, alienation, insecurity and meaninglessness. There is an enormous increase in man's access to nature's power but there is a corresponding decrease in man's ability to face himself and solve his problems. What the world now needs is an integral view of the universe and multidimensional experience of Reality. It is this need that is prompting thousands of people in the East and West to practise meditation. If meditation is to fulfil this need, it should be freed from its narrow doctrinal framework and ascetic shell and integrated into the life of the common man in every walk of life. The best way to do this is to revive and re-establish the Vedic principle of meditation. And the Vedic principle of meditation, we have seen, is inseparable from the principle of *yajña*, sacrifice.

(To be concluded)



## GIRISH CHANDRA GHOSH

SWAMI CHETANANANDA

It is often very difficult for people to understand the actions and behaviour of the great teachers of the world. People judge these great ones according to their own mental make-up and sometimes criticize them without understanding the motive behind their actions. The life story of Buddha tells how the rulers of *Vaisāli* were disappointed when Buddha accepted a dinner invitation from the courtesan Ambāpālī and refused theirs. Jesus' disciples were surprised when they found their Master talking with the socially scorned Samaritan woman near Jacob's well; and again, Simon could not understand why Jesus would let a fallen woman anoint his feet. Similarly, the charge was levelled against Sri Ramakrishna that he did not show 'sufficient moral abhorrence' toward prostitutes and drunkards. On the contrary, we find that one of the marked characteristics of these great souls is that they love the virtuous and the sinner alike. In fact, just as a mother may show more affection to her handicapped child than to her healthy one, so the great teachers of the world are in some ways more sympathetic toward the wayward children of God than toward the virtuous ones. After all, what glory is there in making a good man good? Buddha, Christ, Sri Ramakrishna, and other God-men paid special attention to the fallen, the downtrodden, and the destitute, and by their redeeming power they lifted the lowly to the highest state. They transformed sinners into saints.

Girish Chandra Ghosh is just such an example of the transforming power of Sri

Ramakrishna. Before he met Sri Ramakrishna, Girish Ghosh had led a reckless, hedonistic life. He was a self-proclaimed libertine and a rebel against God. Yet he had a strong mind, and was a man of tremendous heart. The turn that Sri Ramakrishna gave to Girish's life is epitomized in a conversation that took place between them on December 14, 1884:

Ramakrishna. 'Have faith in the Divine Mother and you will attain everything.'

Girish: 'But I am a sinner.'

Ramakrishna. 'The wretch who constantly harps on sin becomes a sinner.'

Girish: 'Sir, the very ground where I used to sit would become unholy.'

Ramakrishna. 'How can you say that? Suppose a light is brought into a room that has been dark a thousand years, does it illumine the room little by little, or all in a flash?'

A little later Girish asked, 'Tell me what I should do.'

Ramakrishna: 'Give God your power of attorney. Let Him do whatever He likes.'

The life story of Girish is very interesting. It gives hope to the hopeless, faith to the faithless, and inspiration to the seekers of God. Girish was born of pious parents in Calcutta on February 28, 1844, and grew up a lively, carefree soul. He inherited from his father a sharp intellect and a pragmatic approach to life, and from his mother a love for literature and devotion for God. But it was his grandmother who introduced him to the rich heritage of India's epics and mythology. In the evenings she would recount to him some of those ancient stories, and he would listen with rapt attention. Once she was describ-

ing the episode of Kṛṣṇa's departure from Vrindaban, one of the moving scenes of the *Bhāgavatam*. Kṛṣṇa's uncle, Akrūra, was sent to bring Kṛṣṇa to Mathura, much to the despair of the shepherd boys and girls of Vrindaban. When Kṛṣṇa sat in the chariot, the boys began to cry, and they pleaded with him, 'O Kṛṣṇa, do not leave us!' The girls held the wheels of the chariot, and some of them grabbed the reins of the horses. But Akrūra would not pay any heed to them. He left Vrindaban with Kṛṣṇa, and thus the days of joy that Kṛṣṇa's playmates had known in his company came to an end. Girish was listening intently and, with tearful eyes, he asked his grandmother, 'Did Kṛṣṇa ever return to Vrindaban?' 'No', replied the grandmother. Girish asked the question three times and each time got the same answer. He then burst into tears and ran away. The story upset him so much that for the next several evenings he refused to listen to any more tales.

When he was only eleven years old his mother died. Although his father was very loving and indulgent toward Girish, he wanted the boy to learn to stand on his own feet and depend on none but God. Once Girish went with his father by boat to visit Navadvīp, the birthplace of Śrī Caitanya, which is several miles up the river Ganga from Calcutta. On the way their boat was suddenly caught in a crosscurrent. As it whirled around in imminent danger of sinking, Girish clung tightly to his father's hand. Luckily the boatman was able to navigate the boat to safety. When they reached the shore, Girish's father said to him: 'Why did you hold my hand? Don't you know that my life is dearer to me than yours? If the boat had started to sink, I would have snatched my hand from you and tried to save my own life. You would have been forsaken.' 'My father's cruel words

hurt me terribly, but I learned that there is no one but God to hold to at the time of danger.' Three years after his mother's death, Girish lost his father.

From his boyhood Girish was a voracious reader and a free thinker. With his father's permission, he enrolled in one school after another, yet he was not happy in any of them. He found the discipline confining, and their methods of teaching did not satisfy his thirst for knowledge. A year after his father's death he was married, and he then left school completely without matriculating. He never went to college.

Girish was born in a transitional period of Indian history when, in Calcutta particularly, Western education and culture were being thrust upon Indian society, challenging the traditional Indian culture and religions. Consequently, the youth of his generation grew up in an atmosphere of doubt, atheism, and cultural chaos. At the threshold of maturity, with little stability either in his family or in society to guide him, Girish started drifting into drunkenness, debauchery, waywardness, and obstinacy. He became the leader of a group of mischievous youths in his locality. Sometimes he would even desecrate images of Hindu gods and goddesses. Within a few years he became a neighbourhood menace. Yet side by side with his perverse behaviour, Girish would raise money to help the poor secure food and medicine, or arrange for the cremation of those in his community who had died. After studying homeopathic medicine, he was able to treat people himself.

Girish would often watch the people in the street through a small opening in his door. One afternoon, when the men of the neighbourhood were at work, he observed a hypocritical astrologer, in the guise of a monk, collecting information from a maidservant about the women of

the household where she worked. The man then entered that house as a fortune-teller, and the simple, curious women came to him to have their palms read. Girish could not tolerate it. He grabbed a branch of a flower tree in the courtyard, broke it off, and ran and attacked the astrologer. He did not stop chasing him until the astrologer was out of the locality.

Although Girish was no longer in school, he did not give up his studies. He eventually became a member of the Asiatic Society and other well-known libraries of Calcutta. His reading included the *Rāmāyaṇa*, the *Mahābhārata*, the *Purāṇas*, and Bengali literature. In this way he gradually became well versed in history, logic, philosophy, zoology, and English literature. He also studied science and medicine. He did not care for superficial knowledge. His capacity for deep penetration into any subject, plus his keen observation of human character and wonderful imagination, are what later made him a natural poet and playwright.

Once a friend of Girish's, who later became a judge of the Calcutta High Court, said to him, 'It is impossible to translate the conversations of the witches of Shakespeare's *Machbeth* into Bengali.' Immediately Girish decided to translate the whole play. It was his nature to rise to any challenge or to do just what he was told not to do. If anyone said, 'Don't go there. There is a ghost,' he would immediately run to that place to see the ghost. He was fearless, independent, and proud of his strength. No one could make him begin work or quit work through pressure or intimidation. He used to say, 'A beast can be tamed by the whip, but not a human being.' His attitude was: If I do not enjoy my work, why should I do it? What he considered right he did, without caring whether others criticized him or not.

Meanwhile, Girish's recklessness and debauchery continued. His father-in-law finally decided to introduce some kind of discipline into Girish's life and secured for him a job as a bookkeeper in his own office. It was while working there that Girish translated *Machbeth* into Bengali. Unfortunately, that manuscript was lost when the company went out of business, because Girish was then away from the office taking care of his sick wife. However, he later retranslated *Machbeth*, and it was staged at the Minerva Theatre in Calcutta. Girish worked in various capacities in different businesses during the next fifteen years. He had indomitable energy, and was becoming increasingly more involved in the theatre. Thus it was common practice for him to work all day at the office and then go to the theatre in the evening to act in a play, returning home at three or four o'clock in the morning.

That person is indeed unfortunate who loses his mother in childhood, his father in boyhood, and his wife in early manhood. In 1874, when Girish was just thirty, his young wife died, leaving him with one son and one daughter. Shortly thereafter he lost his job. A thick, dark cloud of despair seemed to hover over him. As God created grief to subdue man, so man created wine to subdue grief. Again Girish drifted, trying to forget his sorrows with the help of alcohol. But, at the same time, his pent-up emotions found an outlet in a series of exquisite poetical compositions.

During this period he went to Bhagalpur, in Central India, for a short while on some business. One day while he was there he went for a walk with some friends and in a boisterous mood, jumped into a deep ravine. When he tried to climb out he found he was unable to do so. His friends then attempted to rescue him but they also failed. One of them commented: 'Now we are in real trouble. You are an

atheist, and yet no one can save you now but God. Let us all pray together.' Girish found himself joining wholeheartedly in the prayer, and strangely, just then he found a way out of the ravine. After he was safe he said to his friends: 'Today I have called on God out of fear. If I ever call on Him again, it will be out of love, otherwise I will not call on Him, even at the cost of my life'

After returning to Calcutta Girish remarried and also found another job. His new supervisor was an Englishman who introduced the practice of summoning his employees by ringing a bell. One day he rang for Girish. Girish heard the bell but did not respond. The supervisor sent an attendant to ask Girish whether he had heard the bell or not. Girish simply replied, 'No, I didn't hear the bell,' and continued with his work. The supervisor became angry when he heard the report and went to Girish himself. 'I am calling you. Why don't you respond?' 'I did hear the bell', answered Girish. 'Even so, how am I to know that the bell is calling me? The bell never said, "Girish, Girish."' Then more seriously he said: 'Listen, sir. So far I have spoken to you as a gentleman; now I shall be frank. I am not your servant or bearer. I am not accustomed to standing and sitting according to a bell. I feel it is humiliating for a subordinate to be summoned by a bell. And when its employees are humiliated, a company loses its reputation.' The owner of the company came to know of the incident and supported Girish. Later the supervisor apologized to Girish, and they eventually became close friends.

Six months after his second marriage Girish became ill with a virulent type of cholera, and physicians gave up hope for his recovery. Girish was lying on his bed in a semi-conscious state, surrounded by weeping relatives, when he had a vision:

A resplendent female form, wearing a red-bordered cloth, appeared before him. Her face was full of compassion and love. She sat near him and, putting something in his mouth, said, 'Please eat this prasad [sanctified food] and you will be cured.' Girish slowly regained consciousness, and from that moment his recovery began. He later recounted this mysterious vision to his brother disciples and added, 'Sixteen years later (in 1891) when I first went to Jayrambati to see the Holy Mother, I found to my surprise and delight that the woman who had saved my life with the holy prasad was none other than the Holy Mother herself'

Disease, the death of a loved one, an accident, or untold suffering invariably leads to a turning point in one's life. Girish was experiencing all of these and, in spite of his proclaimed atheism, he began to wonder if in fact a greater Reality did exist. He wrote in his memoirs:

At such a crisis I thought, 'Does God exist? Does he listen to the prayers of man? Does he show him the way from darkness to light?' My mind said, 'Yes' Immediately I closed my eyes and prayed, 'Oh God, if thou art, carry me across. Give me refuge. I have none.' I remembered the words of the Gita, 'Those who call on Me alone in the days of affliction, to them too I bring succour and refuge' These words sank deep in my consciousness and gave me solace in sorrow. I found the words of the Gita to be true. As the sun removes the darkness of the night, so the sun of hope arose and dispelled the gloom that had gathered thick in my mind. In the sea of trouble I found the harbour of repose. But I had nurtured doubt all these years. I had argued long, saying, 'There is no God' Where would the impressions of these thoughts go? I began to reason in terms of cause and effect and argued that such and such a cause had produced such and such an effect, which was instrumental in bringing release from this danger. It is said that doubt dies hard. Again I fell victim to doubt. But I had not the courage to say boldly, 'God does not exist.'

Desire for inquiry came. Looking into the current of events, sometimes faith, sometimes doubt, emerged. Everybody with whom I discussed my problem said unanimously that without instruction from a guru doubt would not go and nothing could be achieved in spiritual life. But my intellect refused to accept a human being as a guru; for one has to salute the guru with the words, 'Guru is Brahma, Guru is Viṣṇu, Guru is the Lord Mahesvaia (Śiva), the god of gods, etc.' How could I say this to a man who is like me? This was hypocrisy. But the tyranny of doubt was intolerable. Terrible conflicts pierced my heart through and through. That condition can better be imagined than described. Suppose a man, all of a sudden is forcibly dragged to a dark, solitary room with his eyes covered, and kept confined there with no food and drink. What will be the state of his mind? If you can picture his mental condition, you will be able to understand something of my own. There were moments when I was breathless with emotion. Thoughts of despair bit through me like a saw. At other times the memory of the past was revived and the darkness of my heart knew no bounds.

Girish had read about Śrī Ramakrishna in the *Indian Mirror*. He also came to know how the famous Keshab Chandra Sen and his followers, of the Brahmo Samaj, had been influenced by Śrī Ramakrishna. He then became curious to know more about this holy man of Dakshineswar. Most probably Girish first saw Śrī Ramakrishna in 1877 at Dinanath Basu's house in Calcutta. In his reminiscences Girish recorded his first several meetings with Śrī Ramakrishna. As he described his first meeting:

It was dusk. Lights were lit and they were placed in front of Śrī Ramakrishna. But he began to make repeated inquiries, saying, 'Is it evening? Is it evening?' At this I thought to myself, 'What pretension! It is dusk. Lights are burning in front of him. Yet he cannot tell whether it is evening or not.' Thinking I had seen enough of him, I came away.

A few years later, Girish saw Śrī Ramakrishna for the second time at the

home of Balaram Bose. Many people had been invited that day to meet the Master. A dancing girl named Bidhu was seated next to Śrī Ramakrishna in order to sing a few devotional songs for him. Girish observed Śrī Ramakrishna talking to people and receiving them with the utmost humility, bowing down to the ground. Girish wrote in his reminiscences:

An old friend of mine, pointing at him, said sarcastically, 'Bidhu must have had a previous intimacy with him. That's why he is laughing and joking with her.' But I did not like his insinuations. Just at this time Sisir Kumar Ghosh, the well-known editor of *Amrita Bazar Patrika* arrived. He seemed to have very little respect for Śrī Ramakrishna. He said, 'Let us go, enough of him!' I wanted to stay and see a little more. But he insisted and made me go with him.

In August, 1884, Girish's drama on the life of Śrī Caitanya was creating a sensation in Calcutta. Śrī Ramakrishna heard about the play and wanted to see it, but some devotees objected because several of the roles were played by women of bad reputation. In those days girls from good families did not become actresses in the theatre. Śrī Ramakrishna told the devotees: 'I shall look upon them as the Blissful Mother herself. What if one of them acts the part of Caitanya? An imitation custard apple reminds one of the real fruit.'

Girish wrote in his memoirs for September 21, 1884:

My play, *The Life of Caitanya*, was being enacted in the Star Theatre. I was strolling in the outer compound of the theatre when Mahendra Nath Mukhopadhyaya, one of the devotees of Śrī Ramakrishna, came and said to me, 'Śrī Ramakrishna has come to see the play. If you will give him a free pass, well and good. Otherwise we will buy a ticket for him.'

I replied, 'He will not have to purchase his ticket. But the others will have to.' Saying this, I proceeded to greet him. I found him alighting from the carriage and entering the

compound of the theatre. I wanted to salute him. But before I could do so, he saluted me. I returned his salute. He saluted me again. I bowed my head and he did the same to me. I thought this might continue forever, so I greeted him mentally and led him upstairs and offered him a seat in the box. After arranging with an attendant to fan him, I returned home, feeling indisposed.

This was Girish's third meeting. After the performance a devotee asked Sri Ramakrishna how he had enjoyed the play. He replied with a smile, 'I found the representation the same as the real.' On this occasion, he blessed the actress Binodini, who had played the role of Sri Caitanya, by touching her head and saying, 'Be illumined.' Binodini wrote in her autobiography: 'I don't care if people of the world look down upon my sinful life. I was blessed by Sri Ramakrishna. His loving, hopeful message still sustains me. When I am terribly depressed I see his sweet, compassionate face in my heart and hear his voice, "Say Hari guru, guru Hari (God is your guru, and the guru is your God)."'

People came from all over Bengal to honour Girish for his excellent presentation of Caitanya's life. Even orthodox Vaisnavas (followers of Caitanya) went to see the play in the theatre—a remarkable fact since the theatre was traditionally regarded as an immoral place. Some of them went to Girish's house to meet him personally. Girish, having performed until late the previous night, was not very enthusiastic about receiving effusive visitors during the day, and he was also tired of flattery. Finally he struck upon a plan to get rid of the crowd. Filling his glass from a bottle, he began to drink. The devout Vaisnavas then asked, 'Sir, are you sick? Are you taking medicine?' Girish replied, 'No, it is not medicine. I am drinking wine.' Finding that his life and the ideal expressed in his play were poles apart, the visitors

left. Girish smiled to himself and thought: 'I am Girish Ghosh. I am not afraid or ashamed of anything. Why should I care for other's opinions?'

When on the fourth occasion he saw Sri Ramakrishna, Girish felt for the first time the wonderful divine attraction that drew the devotees to the Master. In his own words:

I was sitting on the porch of a friend's house, which was at the crossroads, when I saw Sri Ramakrishna slowly approaching, accompanied by Narayana and a couple of other devotees. No sooner had I turned my eyes toward him than he saluted me. I returned his salute. Then he went on. For no accountable reason my heart felt drawn toward him by an invisible string. As soon as he had gone a short distance, I felt an urge to follow him. I could not keep calm, for the attraction I felt was not of this earth, it was something for which no former experience had ever prepared me. It was something unique which no words could describe. Just at that moment a person, whose name I do not recall, brought me a message from him and said, 'Sri Ramakrishna is calling you'. I went

Sri Ramakrishna was on his way to Balaram Bose's house, and Girish followed him there. His account continues:

After an exchange of a few words with Balaram, Sri Ramakrishna suddenly exclaimed, 'I am all right. I am all right.' So saying, he went into a state of consciousness which seemed very strange to me. Then he remarked, 'No, no, this is not pretence. This is not pretence.' He remained in this state for a while and then resumed his normal state. I asked him, 'What is a guru?' He answered, 'Do you know what the guru is? He is like a matchmaker. A matchmaker arranges for the union of the bride with the bridegroom. Likewise, a guru prepares for the meeting of the individual soul with his Beloved, the Divine Spirit.' Then he said, 'You need not worry. Your guru has already been chosen.' I asked, 'What is a mantra?' He replied, 'The name of God.'

Still describing the same meeting, Girish wrote;

Then the talk drifted to the theatre, and he said, 'I liked your play very much. The sun of knowledge has begun to shine upon you. All the blemishes of your heart will be washed away. Very soon devotion will arise to sweeten your life with profuse joy and peace.' I told him that I had none of those qualities and that I had written the play only with the idea of making some money. He kept quiet. Then he said, 'Will you take me to your theatre and show me another play of yours?' I replied, 'Very well. Any day you like.' He said, 'You must charge me something.' I said, 'All right, you may pay eight annas.' Sri Ramakrishna said, 'That will allow me a seat in the balcony, which is a very noisy place.' I answered, 'Oh no, you will not go there. You will sit in the same place where you sat last time.' He said, 'Then you must take one rupee.' I said, 'All right, as you please.' Our talk ended.

Girish was a proud man, very much opposed to the idea of bowing down to anyone. But through the influence of Sri Ramakrishna, his haughtiness, rudeness, and pride gradually began to melt. Girish described his thoughts at his fifth meeting:

I was sitting in the dressing room of the theatre when a devotee came to me in a hurry and said with some concern, 'Sri Ramakrishna is here in his carriage.' I replied, 'Very well. Take him to a box and offer him a seat.' But the devotee answered, 'Won't you come and greet him personally and take him there yourself?' With some annoyance I said, 'Does he need me? Can't he get there himself?' Nevertheless, I went. I found him alighting from the carriage. Seeing his serene and radiant face, my stony heart melted. I rebuked myself in shame, and that shame still haunts my memory. To think that I had refused to greet this sweet and gentle soul! Then I conducted him upstairs. There I saluted him, touching his feet. Even now I do not understand the reason, but at that moment a radical change came over me and I was a different man. I offered him a rose, which he accepted. But he returned it again, saying, 'only a god or a dandy is entitled to flowers. What shall I do with it?'

Girish took Sri Ramakrishna and some of his devotees into the hall of the Star

Theatre, where the following conversation took place:

Ramakrishna: 'Ah! You have written nice plays.'

Girish: 'But, sir, how little I assimilate! I just write.'

Ramakrishna: 'No, you assimilate a great deal. The other day I said to you that no one could sketch a divine character unless he had love of God in his heart.'

Girish: 'I often ask myself, "Why bother about the theatre any more?"'

Ramakrishna: 'No, no! Let things be as they are. People will learn much from your plays.'

After the drama, which was on the life of the great devotee Prahlada, Girish asked Sri Ramakrishna, 'How did you like the performance?' Sri Ramakrishna replied: 'I found that it was God himself who was acting the different parts. Those who played the female parts seemed to me the direct embodiments of the Blissful Mother.'

On this occasion Sri Ramakrishna said to Girish, 'There is some crookedness in your heart.' Girish thought to himself, 'Yes, indeed. Plenty of it—of various kinds.' Then he asked the Master, 'How shall I get rid of it?' Sri Ramakrishna replied, 'Have faith.'

One afternoon Girish went to the theatre and found a note saying that Sri Ramakrishna would be visiting Ram Chandra Dutta's house in Calcutta that day. Girish suddenly felt an irresistible desire to see the Master. He left the theatre for Ram Dutta's house, even though he did not know him and had not received a formal invitation. He later wrote in his memoirs:

It was evening. Sri Ramakrishna was dancing in ecstasy in the courtyard. There was singing accompanied by a drum. The devotees were dancing in a circle around Sri Ramakrishna. The words of the song were, 'Nadia is shaken by the surging waves of divine love emanating from the heart of Gauranga.' The courtyard seemed a sea of bliss. He was absorbed in

samadhi. The devotees began to take the dust of his feet. I wanted to do the same but I could not, as I was shy. I was thinking of what others might say if I went to Sri Ramakrishna and took the dust of his feet. No sooner had this thought crossed my mind than Sri Ramakrishna, coming down from samadhi, began dancing again. While dancing he came in front of me and stood still, once more absorbed in samadhi. Now there was no longer any hesitation on my part to touch his feet. I took the dust of his feet.

After the music Sri Ramakrishna came and sat in the drawing room. I followed him. Then he began to talk to me. I asked him 'Will the crookedness go out of my heart?' He said, 'Yes, it will go.' Again I asked him the same question, and he gave the same reply. I repeated it once more, and he said the same thing.

A great change was coming over Girish. He felt as if Sri Ramakrishna was his own close relative. The Master's loving care and concern made Girish understand that he would not condemn him for his shortcomings. Girish wrote :

I went to Dakshineswar. I found Sri Ramakrishna seated on the southern porch of his room. He was talking with a young devotee named Bhavanath. I prostrated myself before Sri Ramakrishna and mentally recited the verse 'Guru is Brahma, Guru is Vishnu, Guru is the Lord Mahesvara, the god of gods.' He said, 'I was just talking about you. And if you don't believe me ask Bhavanath!'

After a while he started to give me some spiritual advice. I stopped him, saying: 'I won't listen to any advice. I have written cartloads of it myself. It doesn't help. Do something that will transform my life.' Hearing these words, Sri Ramakrishna was highly pleased. Ramlal, his nephew, was present. Sri Ramakrishna asked him to recite a particular hymn, which ran thus: 'Go into solitude and shut yourself in a cave. Peace is not there. Peace is where faith is, for faith is the root of all.' I saw a smile playing on the lips of Sri Ramakrishna, and I felt at that moment that I was freed from all impurities. And at that moment, my arrogant head bowed low at his feet. In him I found my sanctuary and all my fear was gone. I prostrated myself before him and was about to return home. He followed me as far as the northern porch. There I asked him, 'Now that I have received your grace, am I to continue the same kind of work that I have been doing?' Sri Ramakrishna replied, 'Yes, why not?' From his words I understood that my connection with the theatre would not hurt my spiritual life.

My heart was filled with joy. I felt as if I was born anew. I was a totally changed man. There was no more doubt or conflict in my mind. 'God is real. God is my sanctuary; I have found my refuge in this God-man. Now I can easily realize God.' Thoughts like these cast their spell on me night and day. In waking or in dreaming, the same mood persisted. 'Fearless am I! I have found my very own. The world can no longer bind me, for even the greatest fear, the fear of death, is gone.'

*(To be continued)*

## AESTHETICS IN RAMANUJA'S PHILOSOPHY

PROF S. S. RAGHAVACHAR

*(Continued from the previous issue)*

(d) *Expressionism*. A view of beauty ancient in origin, but formulated as a theory in recent times, is that it consists 'expression'. On this view, it is not a self-existent principle of aesthetic value, but is what it is by virtue of the revelation or expression of an inner or spiritual content.

The view accords well with the nature of the kingdom of arts. What is to be expressed is an inner vision and, in the process of expression, it acquires self-definition. The expression, we have seen, must fulfil itself in capturing the highest form or reality, of which the focal point of significance is



the Supreme Being. In all moods of their highest expressiveness, the artists of real creative genius confess to their being the passive vehicles of an inspiration, descending, as it were, from above, and appropriating them as its instruments of self-articulation. All great art takes shape, not as something man-made and artificial, but as the veritable self-utterance of the Highest Reality. The artist has the blessed status of an instrument, through whom Reality communicates itself. Thus, art at its best is Nature's own self-expression at its best. Vedānta Deśika, in one of his peak confessions, owns to being a mere *viṇū* on which the Lord (Venkateśa) is playing with delight. This passivity is a state of exaltation to the poet.

While thus art passes out of the realm of the work of man to that of God Himself, natural beauty, to which also the theory of Beauty as Expression has to apply, takes on the aspect of artistic creation. It is not something 'out there' by itself, solidly self-existing, but something projected and set up by the Creator's self-display. Parāśara Bhaṭṭa uses the self-display of a peacock as a simile. It is not unusual to speak of the Creator as a poet, dancer and musician, and Vedic literature uses the carpenter's analogy also. Creation as the art of the Divine Spirit is a valid picture on many counts. Vedānta Deśika, in a memorable poem, speaks of the Creator as a painter, He Himself constituting the canvas, with His creative joy as brush and compassion as the paint. Instead of merely art being expression, beauty in all forms and levels, produced or discovered by man, comes, in the last analysis, to be viewed as the self-expression of Divinity.

Thus Realism, Formalism and Expressionism, properly stretched to their ultimate height of significance, converge towards a *Brahman-centred* aesthetics.

(e) The problem of ugliness is a seemingly intractable one in aesthetics, as is that

of error in epistemology, and that of evil, moral and physical, in theism in general. It is a specific instance of the problem of imperfection, which is no problem for a materialistic or illusionistic metaphysics. The frame-work for treating it may be roughly indicated. Ultimately, imperfection is incidental to finite life; neither Nature nor the Supreme Spirit can be the basis of it for an unclouded vision. *Apurusārtha* can happen to a *jīva*. Objective Nature can have no ugliness in itself, except in a misreading of its nature by a finite mind. The misreading must be in the nature of an arrested vision, wherein there is obscuration of Nature being the embodiment of the Divine. Nature's supreme integration by the immanent Divine presence must be missed, and that it is a self-revelation of the Primal Artist must stand provisionally annulled. Such an arrested, fragmented and partially annulled perception on the part of the finite percipient, creates the impression of objective and ontological ugliness, whose locus in reality is the percipient himself. It is a malady incidental to his finitude. With his development of God-awareness, the possibility of the perception of natural ugliness must get transcended. The proneness to ugliness is much more conspicuous in the realm of art, wherein the finite soul expresses itself. It may be egoistic, subject to the opaqueness of *tamas* and misdirection of *rajas*, and may put forth forms of aesthetic creation embodying finite meanings, depleted of all transcendent reference. Art, with no intimation of the *Paramātmā* in what it depicts, would be genuine ugliness. Just as the essence of evil is the life of God-negation, and of error the apprehension of the finite divorced from the sustaining presence of God in it, even so artistic creation untouched by the Infinite is aesthetic frustration and ugliness. Sudarśana Sūri and Vedānta Deśika assert that in the liberated perception of the emancipated, evil, ugliness and all such antecedent imperfections stand

transmuted into integral elements of ecstasy.<sup>1</sup>

There is no such thing as 'invincible', objective ugliness, and all forms of ugliness are man's own making by virtue of his *jñāna-saṅkoca*. Redemption from this proneness and predicament is an assured possibility.

(f) Modern aesthetics in recent centuries makes a distinction between the beautiful and the sublime, and all reputed writers on the subject dwell on the theme. Bosanquet suggests an alternative pair of terms for the two classes of aesthetic excellence, 'easy' and 'difficult' beauty. Easy beauty is what can please aesthetically, without requiring much strain and effort on the part of the spectator, and is formed of simple forms of aesthetical quality. Difficult beauty or the sublime calls up all the mental resources of the spectator and presents spectacles of great width, intricacy and tension, producing awe as well as amazed admiration. There is no doubt that some kind of synthesis requires to be attempted, and aestheticians are not wanting who have put forth the attempt without minimizing the value of the distinction. The sublime can pass imperceptibly into what Rudolph Otto names the 'numinous', evoking fascination as well as awe. The 'numinous' is the unique category of the religious consciousness according to Otto. It is interesting to note that he considers the eleventh chapter of the *Gītā* as a magnificent presentation of the 'numinous', with all the terrors of mysterious majesty and also the basic element of attraction. In one of the Rāmānujite definitions of *bhakti*, we have a combination of both. It reads, *Mahanīyavisaye prītiḥ*, love directed to what is grand. The point is that the distinction between the two aesthetic qualities of beauty and sublimity is not

absolute, and they can be seen in fusion in the highest mystic experience. In the Viśiṣṭādvaitic idea of the Supreme Being, there is a combination of the two ideas of *saṁlabhya* and *paratva*, accessibility and over-powering greatness. The two aspects of the Divine are fundamental. What cannot be easily reconciled on the purely aesthetic plane seems to be synthesized in religious experience. The *Upanisads* abound in paradoxical declarations of this profound intimacy and infinity of the Divine. Śrī Kṛṣṇa, in His mighty self-revelation in the eleventh chapter of the *Gītā*, is pictured as having the sun and moon as His two eyes. Arjuna exclaims, *Hṛsito'smi dṛṣtvā bhayena ca pravyathitam mano me*.<sup>2</sup> Rāmānuja explains the sun as signifying blazing powers, *pratāpa*, and the moon as representing *prasāda*, condescending grace. This seems to be a happy amalgamation of the two paradoxical attributes of God. The aesthetic dichotomy is resolved in Rāmānuja's idea of God and his interpretation of the *vīṣṇarūpa*. The root of this elaboration is already contained in the *Viṣṇu-purāṇa* description of the form of Viṣṇu as *śubhāśraya*.

### Two types art

An aesthetic patterned on the basis of Rāmānuja's philosophy cannot but be heavily loaded with Vedāntic thought. A legitimate question arises and whether such a line of thinking leaves room for the autonomy of the aesthetic consciousness and the cult of 'Art for Art's sake', needs consideration.

Some elementary principles must be noted before the question can be properly discussed. Aesthetic experience is primarily a state of pleasure. But the pleasure is of a contemplative nature. It is pleasure arising on the contemplation of a perceived or imagined object. As it is said, it is a

1. *Śrūta-prakāśikā* 4.10 ad 1  
*Tattvamuktā-kalāpa* 2.65

2. *Bhagavad-Gītā* 11.45.

'relevant pleasure' with an 'objective correlate'. Hence it stands different from pleasures of escape and pleasures accompanying the satisfaction of unaesthetic desires. In the classification of pleasures given in the *Gītā*, it comes under *sāttvika* pleasure. It is because of this *sāttvika* character that even tragic situations, depicted in literature, can be sources of aesthetic enjoyment. It affords the required 'psychic distance'. It is contemplative in the sense that it is not an action-conditioned satisfaction. The executive work of the artist is for purposes of securing a full vision of the aesthetic object, and thus subordinate to the 'full seeing'. In being contemplative, it is akin to intellectual or theoretical satisfaction. But there is a vital distinction, that its motivation is not the propounding of a true or objectively tenable view of things. It seeks a vision of the beautiful as an end in itself, be it perceptual or imaginative, with a 'willing suspension of disbelief'. The concern with truth, metaphysical or scientific, does not enter into the approach here. The fundamental interest is to contemplate on a thing of beauty, irrespective of its objective existence or otherwise. Fiction is not excluded from the realm of the aesthetic object, provided it is artistically convincing in the sense of being possible.

In this background of general aesthetics, we have to construe what would be the stand of Rāmānuja's philosophy on the autonomy of art. It is necessary to distinguish two levels of art, that which is manifestly secular, with no spiritual motivation, and that which is integrated as a factor within the practice of *bhakti*. Something definite can be conjectured on these two levels.

(a) Art may be secular in conscious intention; but in so far as it depicts real beauty and sublimity, according to the general view of *vibhūti*, it must carry suggestions of the Immanent Infinite. If it is a source of real joy, as all joy flows from

*Brahman*, the only source of joy according to the *Upaniṣads*, it must be in some way an unknowing experience of *Brahman*. It cannot be cut off from that fundamental principle of beauty and joy. For carrying this touch of *Brahman*, all that is required of the work of art is that it should be true to its nature and accomplish its final purpose of contemplative pleasure. It should be free art for its own sake and, by virtue of its perfection, it inevitably establishes an unintended communion with the Divine. Thus, there is no jeopardy to the maxim of 'Art for Art's sake', but still at its height of triumph such art carries a self-transcendent message.

(b) At the second level, art participates integrally in the wholeness of the spiritual pursuit characteristic of *bhakti*. The cognitive aspect of personality seeks the Divine through *śravaṇa*, *manana*, *nididhyāsana* and *sākṣātkāra*. The volitional or active nature expresses itself in *karma-yoga* in the preliminary stages and flows into loving service called *kainkarya* or *sevā* in the advanced stage. The emotional and imaginative nature takes shape as love, *prīti* and *dhyāna* filled with *prīti*. It is the last aspect that manifests itself in the aesthetic life of *bhakti*. Now, spiritual art that is the materialisation of *bhakti*, is not independent of *jñāna* and *sevā*. It cannot be brought under 'Art for Art's sake', but is art impelled by the devotional zest and contributing to the fullness of Godward endeavour. The question is whether the art-factor suffers diminution in this fusion. Does it lose its innate rapture, because it includes in itself *jñāna* and *sevā*? Does *jñāna*, in its turn, lose its truth-value because it is fused with love of God and work dedicated to God? Does righteous endeavour become less righteous, because it is governed by the understanding of God and saturated with love of God? In general, do the three ultimate values of truth, goodness and beauty lose the elements of intrinsic value posses-

sed by them in their severalty, when they enter into a process of joint realisation? It seems to be that they could not reach their full stature when pursued in mutual isolation, as they were provisionally in their initial realisation. They acquire enhancement in this supreme synthesis. For truth to be alienated from beauty and goodness is a privation. For beauty, to rest on mere 'suspension of disbelief' and not on the certitude of authentic insight, and for it to be divorced from the life of holiness, is to lose a part of its vital substance. For goodness, not to be founded on the reality-factor and not to have the benefit of the aesthetic contemplativeness, is to be just preparatory to fuller actualisation. The conclusion may be hazarded, in the light of these considerations, that art that is spiritualised, though losing its autonomy, gains in the scale of values. Well may Vedānta Deśika spurn the mess of earthly pottage and cast aside trivial themes and opt for the inexhaustible riches of God. Good art may flourish in its autonomy, but great art finds its fulfilment in what is more than mere art.

### *Theory of rasa in Viśiṣṭādvaita*

The poetic theory of *Rasa* seems to be favouring a kind of pseudo-Advaitism for a long time, and some critical clarification in the light of Rāmānuja's thought needs to be made on the subject. The theory is founded on Bharata's treatise on Dramatics. It describes eight fundamental emotional propensities of man and depicts how these evolve into eight enjoyable states of emotion, called *rasa*, in the spectators of drama. These emotions are evoked by the appropriate objects, *vibhāvas*, presented in an idealised manner (*alaukika*) on the stage with all the accessory and associated factors. Vedānta Deśika points out in his *Nyāya-siddhāntajana* that the basic emotional potentialities, *sthāyibhāvas*, are all forms of *dharma-bhūta-jñāna*, conscious-

ness adjectival to the self, and are not a bundle of distinct faculties. He also asserts that the list is not complete as it does not provide for *śānta-rasa*, the enjoyment at the spectacle of a spiritual life. That such a life is not one of inert quietude but an active exercise of Godward energy, renders it suitable for dramatic reproduction.<sup>3</sup> The locus of the *rasa*, the aesthetic delight, is certainly the spectator, and it lies in an imaginative 'empathy' with the feelings represented in the play on the stage. The spectator's emotional identification with the feelings displayed in his state of *sattva*, overcoming inertia and ego-centric pre-occupations does bring out the final aesthetic joy. These are the well-known tenets of the *Rasa*-theory.

It is to be remarked that the identity of the feeling of the spectator with what is depicted by the actor and with that of the poet and even of the character presented, does not lead to *Advaita*. The aesthetic object, *vibhāva*, is there in the dramatic presentation, and no identification with it is required or posited. It is only identification with the feelings it evokes that is involved in the enjoyment of *rasa*. No fusion of the subject and object is there in the experience. There is just a duplication of the feelings arising in reaction to the object in the poet, the character, the actor and the spectator. Such a community of feeling is actually invoked by Vedānta Deśika in explanation of the *bhogasāmya* between the *jīvātman* and *Paramātman*, in the stage of *mokṣa*, in spite of the distinction between the two in that *jagadvyāpāra* is uniquely characteristic of the Supreme *Ātman*.<sup>4</sup> The *vibhāva*, the aesthetic object, stands in undiminished objectivity, on which rests securely the unfoldment of the subject's *sthāyibhāva* into

3. See also his *Sankalpa-sūrvodaya*, Kanchipuram edition, 10.4.

4. Cf. *Virodha-parihāra*, Kanchipuram edition, p. 382.

the *rasa*-state. Jagannātha regrets this necessity for an objective support for *rasa*, but for which *rasānubhava* would be straightaway the same as *Brahmānubhava* of the Advaitic School.

Neither the subject of *rasa*, nor its object, is lost in the other. There is just a unification of the emotions of the subject in response to the object. This is all that seems to be the essential fact of the situation according to the *Rasa* theory. It stands incorporated in the Viśiṣṭādvaitic theory in the hands of masters like Vedānta Deśika.

Something more can be naturally said from Rāmānuja's standpoint on the subject-object relation in the stage of joy or *ānanda* of which aesthetic experience is a good instance. In the *Bhūmādhikaraṇa* of the *Śrībhāṣya*, (1. 3. 7-8) the related *Chāndogya* (VII) passage is interpreted as representing the joy arising in the experience of the all-inclusive Infinite. The passage does not signify for Rāmānuja the elimination of the object, nor is it understood as propounding the joyous nature of the subject resting in itself, bereft of the object. In the same way, the *Daharādhikaraṇa* (1. 3. 13-22) speaks of the individual subject as growing into its fullness of natural splendour on its approach to *Brahman*, the Supreme Light. Thus, the subject too remains in the supreme experience. Rather, it attains in it to the fullness of its individual stature. Only pleasure of a

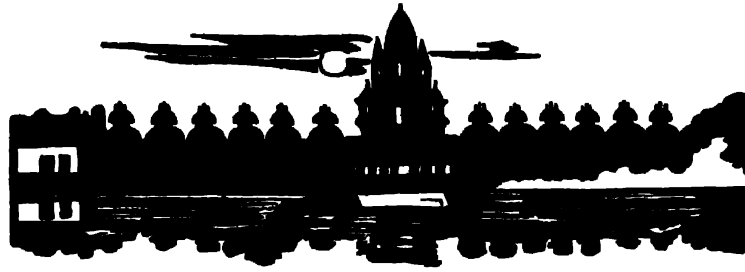
*tāmāsa* kind induces self-oblivion, as Sudarśana Sūri remarks.<sup>5</sup> The *Ānandamayādhikaraṇa* (1. 1. 13-20) has a strong and categorical pronouncement on the issue of the difference or identity between the subject and object in the state of *ānanda*: *Yallābhāt yāh ānandi bhavati, sa sa eveti anunnattah ko bravīti?* (Who but a mad man will say that by attaining whichever being whoever becomes blissful, —he is himself that same blissful being?)<sup>6</sup>

There is one necessary addition to be made. The *jīva* who meditates on *Brahman* must not look upon his object of adoration as outside his self, but as located in the interior of his own spiritual personality. This is brought out well in the *Śrībhāṣya* (4. 1. *Adhi.* 2). Again, in the state of *mekṣa*, he is said to realise the Divine Infinite as immanent in his own soul (4. 4. *Adhi.* 2). These fundamental propositions must govern our understanding of the subject-object relation in the experience of aesthetic joy. The reality of the individual subject, the reality of the Supreme Object and Its determining immanence in the former are the three relevant aspect of the highest state of *ānanda*.

(Concluded)

5. *Śrūta-prakāśikā* 4.1.1

6. *Śrībhāṣya* 1.1.20



## INSIGHT AND MANIFESTATION: A WAY OF PRAYER IN A CHRISTIAN CONTEXT—I

Dr BEATRICE BRUTEAU

One of the most popular and general definitions of prayer is that it is a 'lifting of the mind and heart to God'. But perhaps we may also say that it is a matter of coming to know and to coincide with, or to play one's full role in, The Reality. Even though I am going to describe one particular way of prayer in one particular context, I feel it is valuable to situate the discussion in the widest context that still seems relevant. And in the present case I am interested not to be bound to the dualism implicit in theism or to a purely internal and subjective exercise of only the mental and affective faculties.

I like to think that prayer involves *all* our faculties, directed toward the *whole* of Reality and the *totality* of meaning: all of me toward and in all of It. This will mean that prayer includes expression and action (manifestation) as well as interiorization and transcendence (insight). The way in which these seemingly opposed motions are reconciled will also, I hope, help us to overcome a division of prayer attitudes into those which are dualistic and those which are nondualistic.

Prayer 'in a Christian context' is prayer that has something to do with Jesus: either he is the object of it, or the example of it, or in some other way he mediates or enables it. In fact, I will argue, the theol-

ogy which identifies Jesus as Logos Incarnate gives us a very good base from which to develop a description of prayer mediated through him as both insight and manifestation.

The Logos, or Word of God, is the single unitary principle (the 'only begotten Son') through which the Absolute One (the 'Father') expresses or manifests itself in the world.<sup>1</sup> It is therefore also the single and unitary principle through which realization of the One can be attained<sup>2</sup> and through which alone participation in the divine manifestation is possible.<sup>3</sup>

Thus the Logos is the Mediator, or Interface, between the Absolute One to which insight aspires and the universal flux of the Many in which the One is manifest in the world. It is the will of the One to manifest itself through the Many, and it is the will of the Many to gain insight into the One. The Logos is the 'level' of Reality on

1. 'All things were made through him, and without him was not anything made that was made' John 1:3. 'No one has seen God at any time; but the only begotten Son, who is in the bosom of the Father, he has manifested him' John 1:18.

2. 'No one comes to the Father but by me.' John 14:6.

3. 'He who abides in me, and I in him, he it is that bears much fruit, for apart from me you can do nothing.' John 15:5.

which this insight takes place and from which this manifestation originates. The meaning of Christian prayer, therefore, according to this line of thought, is to realize oneself as situated, or 'located', on the level of the Logos Interface, or put in traditional mystic terms, to be united with the Son of God.

That the Logos should be available to us incarnate as a human being<sup>4</sup> gives the prayer a concrete starting point which lies within the capacity of anyone. The one who prays may thus begin in an everyday person-to-person dualistic fashion by relating to this human being who incarnates the Logos principle. But by pursuing and pressing this relationship, one will enter more and more intimately into the interior reality of the Incarnate Logos; and eventually, in order to fulfill the desire of the dualistic relationship really to know and to be bonded to that Person, one will have to enter so completely into the interior movements of that Person that the last stage of the relationship will take on the character of a nondualistic state. And ultimately the one who prays will be obliged, by the fulfillment of the desire for insight, to join in the activity of manifestation which is the essential occupation of the Logos.

This is, in summary outline, the idea that I propose to set forth here as a way of prayer in a Christian context. I should like to emphasize that it is 'a' way and by no means 'the' way. And it is only 'in a Christian context', not definitively 'Christian prayer'. Christianity has been a dogmatic and authoritarian religion, judging rigorously whether statements made in its name are true to its conception of itself. What follows does not pretend to be authoritative in this sense or to be concerned to accommodate itself to any system of

authority that claims to speak for the Christian religion. It is simply a way of looking at the experiences that some people have in prayer, and it may therefore be useful to others.

### *Both Insight and Manifestation*

'Insight' refers to those experiences in which I the subject see or understand 'or love an object. In the strong sense it means that I *see into* the inmost reality of the object, know the deepest truth of it I am no longer ignorant or blind with respect to it I know it; I have spiritually assimilated its reality.

In the case of the life of prayer, 'insight' refers to the goal that is expressed as 'knowing and loving God' or 'seeing the truth' or 'being enlightened' or 'realizing the Ultimate'. The journey to Insight is often regarded as a passage from the unreal to the Real, from Samsara to Nirvana, from the Many to the One.

'Manifestation', on the other hand, bespeaks a movement in the opposite direction. The subject has the experience of being the author and origin of some reality and projecting it outward. If 'truth' is the adequation of thought and thing, this can be brought about either by making the thought match the thing, which is the case in knowledge or insight, or by making the thing match the thought, which is the case in creation, or manifestation. One who manifests coincides with the reality that one is and expresses this reality (by action, image, imitation, symbol, etc.) outwardly in the environment. It is a movement from the One to the Many, from the general to the particular, from the Absolute to the relative, from the formless to the formed or from the Form to the embodiment.

Now, it seems to me that very often the spiritual life, where it is studied as the mystical life, as distinguished from the moral or religious life (concerned with

4. 'The Word became flesh and dwelt among us, full of grace and truth.' John 1:14.

creed, code, and cult), has been presented as a matter only of attaining insight. All our efforts are directed to leaving this multi-form world and cleaving to the One God.

But once one is so united with God, then what? Usually this is considered the end of the story: the prince and princess are wed and live happily ever after. However, Sri Aurobindo criticized Sankaracharya for taking this attitude, saying that he had told only half the story. And I have heard that Swami Brahmananda said that 'spiritual life begins with samadhi'.<sup>5</sup> In a Christian context one would say, if one is united with God, then one must do what God does, and what God does is be endlessly self-expressive (as well as self-uniting) in the Trinity, and create the world (worlds).

We have to bear in mind that 'world' is a variable. The 'world' that God/we will create when we coincide with the deeper levels of our reality will not be the same as the world that we abandoned in order to find God. It will not be the same even though we do go back to hewing wood and drawing water in the realization that Nirvana is Samsara, because this realization will have completely changed our perception of it. And within the confines of the relative, finite, changing world, we may well do quite creative things, making the everyday world different even in our usual sense of the word. In fact, this creative relation to the world, I will say, is a central fac-

tor in the prayer that takes place 'in or through Jesus'.

The 'way of prayer' offered here, therefore, will suggest that both the insight movement and the manifestation movement are intrinsic to the prayer activity and that they are joined in the experience of union with Jesus. The insight movement leads into the reality of Jesus which turns out to be the creative action of manifestation.

### *The Way of Insight*

People who first begin to pray in some relation to Jesus frequently start off by asking something of him. They begin with the prayer of *petition*. In the Gospel stories we see many instances of this. People bring their problems, their needs, and beseech Jesus to do something about them. Sometimes when they have gotten what they asked, they simply go off again about their own affairs without so much as a thank-you.<sup>6</sup>

The point is that the one who prays is more interested in getting the job done than interested in Jesus. Jesus comes into it as the one who does the job. Even if one is grateful, the consciousness may still be centered in the sense of personal need and personal gratification, the local-self experience being so intense that it is not possible to be very aware of any other perspective or larger field of meaning.<sup>7</sup>

But sometimes also those who have had their petitions granted find that their attention moves from their private concern to a sense of awe in the presence of anyone

5. Sri Aurobindo, *The Life Divine*, Vol II Part I, chap. VI. 'Reality and the Cosmic Illusion.' (There are various editions, with different paginations, all available from Sri Aurobindo Ashram, Pondicherry)

'Sri Ramakrishna has shown us a higher state than nirvikalpa samādhi; and Maharaj said that spiritual life begins with nirvikalpa samādhi.' Reported to the writer, from a monastic diary of conversations with Swami Prabhavananda, 1950.

6. The story of the cleansing of the ten lepers, only one of whom came back to give thanks, beginning at Luke 17:12.

7. (After the feeding of the five thousand) 'Jesus answered them, "Truly, truly, I say to you, you seek me, not because you saw signs, but because you ate your fill of the loaves."' John 6:26.



who can do such great deeds.<sup>8</sup> Part of the interest in the one who prays, at this stage, is a sort of curiosity or fascination for an experience of another kind of reality.

This can lead to a more serious interest in Jesus and what we may call the prayer of *appreciation*. (We should not be too rigid about lining up stages and putting the life of prayer in a certain sequence. I am doing it this way in order to develop a sense of a gradually increasing penetration into the interiority of Jesus in its dynamic and personal reality.) In this prayer, the one who prays does not have some third-party job on hand, but only looks at Jesus for himself, to study and value his qualities. One does have in mind, however, to try to imitate these qualities, to try to gain similar goods for oneself. In this sense the focus is still on improving the one who prays, and Jesus is the means to this end.

What one does in this prayer is to observe Jesus carefully, study his character and action, situation and motivation, compare these with one's own situation and character with a view to making appropriate alterations in oneself. The prayer may take the form of asking 'What would Jesus do in a case like this?' or after reviewing some work of Jesus, asking 'How can I do likewise in my life?' One analyzes, tries to get a new point of view on one's life which can encourage a different attitude and outlook, and then one makes resolutions for practical action. As a follow-up, one examines oneself with respect to the resolutions and in general tries to train and discipline oneself to imitate the behaviour and the implied motivations of Jesus.<sup>9</sup>

8. (After the calming of the storm at sea) 'the men marvelled, saying, "What sort of man is this, that even winds and sea obey him?"' Matthew 8:27

9. (After the story of the Good Samaritan) 'Jesus said to him, "Go and do likewise."' Luke 10:37. After washing his disciples' feet,

This type of prayer obliges one to look very intently at Jesus, and at some point one may be distracted from one's original intention of using Jesus as a model for improving oneself and just be caught by the beauty of Jesus himself. The consciousness will forget to be concerned about itself and will be lost in admiration and joy. But Jesus is still only an object of contemplation. It is, so to speak, his picture that one looks at. He does not look back. He is thought about, but he himself is absent. In petition one had addressed oneself to Jesus, but one had not been really interested in *him* but only in what he could do for one. Now there is more interest in Jesus for himself but one considers him only in the third person one says 'he is thus and so' *about* him.

The important movement from this stage is again to speak directly to Jesus, in the second person, saying 'you'. Jesus himself is now present. But this time one speaks to Jesus *about* Jesus—and about oneself in the context of a developing personal relationship. What one focuses on is the relationship itself, the growing friendship. Friends talk to each other. This is the prayer of *dialogue*.

The one who prays may speak about what was done in the previous prayer of appreciation and will note the extraordinary shift in consciousness that takes place when one moves from contemplating the beauty of a picture to communicating face to face with that beauty in person. One begins by speaking about these subjects but soon discovers that this is only 'background music' for what is really going on, which is the sense of being in living contact with Jesus. Nothing that one can talk *about* is anywhere near

Jesus said, 'I have given you an example, that you also should do as I have done.' John 13:15. In the Last Discourse, Jesus said, 'I do as the Father has commanded me, so that the world may know that I love the Father.' John 14:31.

comparable in interest and importance to *the fact of* this contact and intercommunication.<sup>10</sup> And so in a sense it doesn't matter what one talks of, since this is not the point. One is not trying to get answers or solutions to problems. One is experiencing *being* in a new way.

Two things happen at this point. The one who prays of course sees deeper into Jesus. This is quite different from looking at his picture, studying reports about him, analyzing his qualities, reasoning about them, and trying to draw lessons from them. The living reality of any person is always incomparably richer than any of the behaviour products that can be reported of that person. Furthermore, when one is engaged in a person-to-person relationship, the intercommunication itself is a living reality and is experienced in the moment as a living reality. There is living, energy-filled reality in it, moving both ways between the two persons.

Therefore, the second thing that happens is that Jesus sees deeper into the one who prays and addresses himself to that deeper level, awakening the realization of it in the one whom he addresses. Because Jesus speaks to a certain reality in the one who prays, that reality comes to life,<sup>11</sup> comes to

self-consciousness and actuality. One becomes larger, and there is a release of new energy.

This is the first warning shock of what is to come, of the transformation of our self-consciousness and our world-consciousness that will be the consequence of intercourse with the consciousness of Jesus. But at this stage we may think that it only means that we are finding our 'real self' as a finer and more rounded and secure personality than we had previously expressed or experienced. We feel that our individual selfhood has somehow matured and come into its own. Our description of ourself has changed. We feel 'forgiven', 'saved'. We do not yet suspect that the whole idea of there being any description of our selfhood at all will be wiped out, and indeed that the very notion of 'individual self' will undergo a radical metamorphosis. We are very aware of the duality in the relationship and we enjoy it. The pleasure comes from the sense of the other being *other* and affirming us from his position of otherness.

Now it is necessary to press the advantage, not to relax. One must push deeper and deeper into Jesus and let him illuminate deeper and deeper levels of reality within oneself. Very strange things begin to happen as this effort progresses. The outward human personality of Jesus expands and fades as one enters more into the interior of his consciousness, and a complementary transformation takes place also in oneself as in a mirror image. What one *is* transcends what one does or what one says or what descriptive traits and qualities one has. In this stage, which we may call the prayer of *intimacy*, what Jesus *is* communes directly with what one *is*, passing through and beyond the mediation of either's behaviour or descriptive qualities. As the descriptions melt and evaporate before the burning radiance of each person's central reality, so the words that would capture those descriptions fail and silence super-

10. The story of the appearance of the Risen Jesus to two of his disciples on the road to Emmaus: "They said to each other, "Did not our hearts burn within us while he talked to us on the road ..?""

11. The raising of Jairus' daughter: "Taking her by the hand he said to her, "Little girl. I say to you, arise." And immediately the girl got up. And he told them to give her something to eat." Mark 5:41-43. The raising of Lazarus: "(Jesus) cried with a loud voice, "Lazarus, come out." The dead man came out. ...bound with bandages ..Jesus said to them, "Unbind him and let him go." John 11:43-44. In applying these stories to our prayer life, we may as well take note of the instructions to unbind and to feed the new life.

venes. The two luminosities gradually grow together.

One can no longer be said to be 'looking at' Jesus, as though he had a surface from which light was reflected. One has looked right *into* him as he has looked into oneself. And looking at/into him in order to understand him, one is regarding his living consciousness. But the only way to 'regard' a living consciousness is to be conscious of what it is conscious of. The one who prays discovers that what is happening is that one is actually looking up to God the Father and out on the world through the Consciousness of Jesus.

This is not the same as the exercise one did in the stage of studying Jesus and trying to figure out what he thought about a situation. It is not 'as if'. It is the experience of being admitted into a personal world, as though one had asked 'Where do you live?' and the other had answered, 'Come and see'.<sup>12</sup> One sees the other 'at home', and gets a sense of the rhythms, the atmosphere, the vital core of the other. But the only way one gets a sense of these rhythms is by getting into the rhythms oneself. One feels that Jesus and one are somehow yoked together and move as a single unit.<sup>13</sup> The act of praying at this stage is no longer bounded by any demarcated time of prayer. Every moment of living is praying, because praying is living—one sharing the life of Jesus and Jesus sharing one's life, like two lives that have flowed together, or one life in two persons.<sup>14</sup> There is no satisfactory way of saying it, but it seems perfectly clear in the experience.

Where is the 'individual self' now? There is no way to answer, because the question no longer makes sense. One could say that

it has been surrendered to the Divine, or has merged into the Ultimate Reality, or that it is fulfilled in being united to its lover. But to anyone who still experiences the individual self as being the self, the real self, and the only self, any such account will sound like destruction of one's essential being. What has happened is that one has shifted what one means by 'myself'. It had been going on gradually ever since the dialogue began, and one had had steadily to deepen and expand one's sense of selfhood to match the depth and vastness one was discovering in Jesus and which he was evoking in one. We had thought that selfhood was the quintessence of individuation; now it appears that selfhood cannot be individuated in the sense of excluding other selves. On the contrary, this entering into, and sharing the consciousness of, another self is the most characteristic act of a self.

Dualism has passed over into nondualism, by the very intensity of its own dualistic energy. By desiring the other more and more, one was obliged ultimately to enter into the very life of the other. In order to know his mind and his will, so that one might love him the better, one had to be 'entrained' by the rhythmic pattern of his mind, his will; one had to be 'in phase' with him. It was not that one had to think about the same object or have the same opinions or views, or that one had to will the same event. Rather, one's *activity* of seeing, thinking, feeling, willing was united with his *activity*; the dynamisms are united and synchronized.

And so finally one comes into the prayer of *coincidence*, in which it is not even a question of seeing the world through the consciousness of Jesus but of experiencing Jesus' consciousness of himself. If one is really going to unite with the person one loves, one must become vividly aware of that person's sense of identity, the most intimate thing about him.

Jesus experiences himself as the Son of

12. The story of the first meeting of Jesus and two of his disciples. John 1:38-39.

13. 'Take my yoke upon you.' Matthew 11:29.

14. 'In that day you will know that I am in my Father, and you in me, and I in you.' John 14:20.

God, the perfectly obedient one,<sup>15</sup> the beloved one,<sup>16</sup> the very image of the Ultimate,<sup>17</sup> with whom indeed he is one.<sup>18</sup> It is the interior of this experience that is thrown open to the one who prays. But in order to become properly conscious of this, the one who prays must be conscious of it *from the inside*, and there is no way to do this except by experiencing it as being true of oneself. Perhaps it was this experience that provoked St. John of the Cross to exclaim :

Let us rejoice, beloved, and let us go forth to behold ourselves in your beauty that I may resemble you in your beauty and you resemble me in your beauty, and my beauty may be your beauty and your beauty my beauty; wherefore I shall be you in your beauty, and you will be me in your beauty, because your beauty will be my beauty; and therefore we shall behold each other in your beauty.<sup>19</sup>

I think we should notice that in some of these clauses St. John speaks as though there is a distinction between the beloved and himself, and in some of them he speaks as though there is not a distinction. He surely does this because both experiences are true; and if this does not square with our logic, it is because our former method of conceiving distinction is no longer applicable to such an experience.

We have been accustomed to distinguish among things that are objects for our consciousness, and to distinguish any object of

our consciousness from our consciousness itself. But now it is a question of distinguishing two consciousnesses both of which are operating as *subjects*. It is essential to stress that in this experience, the one who prays does not experience the consciousness of the beloved as an object. The whole point of the experience—and the reason why it is not dualistic in the usual sense of that term—is precisely that the consciousness of the beloved is experienced somehow from the inside, that is, *from the subject side*, not as an object.

The experience may, for instance, feel like this: One seems to become aware of the Divine Consciousness, as incarnate in Jesus, as if one is experiencing the consciousness as one's own, and yet be very aware that the acts of that consciousness are far greater than those customary to 'one's own' consciousness. One may experience the Divine Will, say, in its intention to heal, and be astonished at its strength. One may have an impression of a great wind, or a huge ocean wave, or of some enormous irresistible force. But that force, the Will, is not experienced as directed toward oneself—one is not the object of the Will—but rather, one feels the Will *move* through one's own consciousness so that one feels what it feels like to will so mightily. One experiences it as if one is *doing* the willing, and yet one is amazed and overwhelmed by the supernatural power of the Will.<sup>20</sup>

15. 'I have kept my Father's commandments and abide in his love.' John 15:10 'I always do what is pleasing to him.' John 8:29.

16. The voice heard at Jesus' baptism: 'This is my beloved Son, with whom I am well pleased.' Matthew 3:17.

17. 'He who has seen me has seen the Father; how can you say, "Show us the Father"? Do you not believe that I am in the Father and the Father in me?' John 14:9.

18. 'I and the Father are one.' John 10:30.

19. St. John of the Cross, *Spiritual Canticle*, stanza 36.

20. 'The mystic experience ends with the words, "I live yet not I, but God in me," (cf. Galatians 2:20). This feeling of identification, which is the term of mystical activity, has a very important significance. In its early stages the mystic consciousness feels the Absolute in opposition to the Self as mystic activity goes on, it tends to abolish this opposition. . . . When it has reached its term the consciousness finds itself possessed by the sense of a Being at one and the same time greater than the Self and identical with it: great enough to be God, intimate enough to be me.' E. Recejac, *Essai sur les fondements de la Connaissance Mystique*

### *Complex, or Trinitarian, Nondualism*

This type of nondualistic experience is not the same as discovering that there is only one subject in existence, that the whole world has collapsed into a single consciousness, and that we had been mistaken when we had believed that there were many beings. It is neither simple dualism nor simplistic monism. It is an experiential realization of the complex nondualism that is characteristic of personal communion.

In our dualistic moments, we have used images of exclusion, mutual exteriority, and incommunicability to secure our intuition of the independence of the self as agent and to protect ourselves against the insanity of solipsism. In our monistic moments, on the other hand, we have realized that exclusion, incommunicability, and mutual exteriority are false, and we may have concluded that there cannot be more than one real agent. The doctrine of complex unity holds, as against both of these, that a plurality of autonomous agents exist who perfectly indwell one another, and further, that this is *necessary*—both the plurality and the indwelling—because of the nature of selfhood.

It is not necessary for beings to be mutually exterior and incommunicable in order to be autonomous. This is necessary only if the beings are defined by attributes that they possess and by which alone they can be distinguished one from another. If the autonomy is vested rather in the initiative of action rooted in the existential reality of the being, then there can be distinction together with mutual interiority and full communion. But only a personal being—i.e. a reflexively conscious *self*—can fulfill this requirement, can really be an initiator, an author of action. Subpersonal beings act

as parts of cycles or loops of feedback reactions with their environments. A good deal of human behaviour is obviously of this kind, also, but the person, *qua* person, is *capable* of an authoritative act, an act that begins in the person and is not a re-action to an act begun elsewhere.

Persons, therefore, can be both autonomous and mutually indwelling. But, it must also be argued, *person* is not only the kind of being which can do this, it is the kind of being which characteristically does do this, and in fact must do this if it is really to be a person.

The insight discovery, then, of this line of prayer experience is that Ultimate Reality is not of the nature of any kind of object, that is, it is not anything that can possibly be an object for an observing consciousness (God is invisible). It is rather of the nature of selfhood (Brahman is Atman), i.e. the interior realization of one's existence as subject.

'Subject,' of course, is that which does have awareness of 'objects'. But the highest 'object' of which a subject can be aware is another subject like itself. And the only way to bring this awareness to perfection, as outlined in the stages of prayer described above, is to be aware of it as it is aware of itself. This suggests that subjective awareness of objects is a diminished representation of the fullness of subjective being, which is perfect indwelling of another subjectivity. So, if any being's characteristic nature, or essential being, is defined by its highest activity, then a conscious subject is one which is conscious of conscious subjects precisely as subjects.

If this argument has any merit, perhaps it could be applied to the Trinity, and we could say that the Divine Persons are each aware of each subject consciousness in the Godhead. Within the Trinity, there is no object: no Person is outside any other Person. This complete interior coincidence of the Persons is expressed by saying that

(Paris, 1897). translation by S. C. Upton, *Essay on the Bases of the Mystic Knowledge* (London, 1899), p. 45, quoted by Evelyn Underhill in *Mysticism* (New York: Dutton paperback, p. 82).

the Godhead is only one. But that each Person knows and loves each other Person is also true, and for that they must be in some manner distinct. This distinction arises from the existential reality of the autonomous acts of knowing and loving which also constitute the unity. So the plurality and the unity are both referred to the same act, and that act is characteristic of the highest conscious selfhood. If Ultimate Reality is of the nature of selfhood, then because of the nature of selfhood, it must be a complex unity of this sort.

When the one who prays, therefore, is united with the beloved but not simply collapsed into a realization that there never

was anything except that one being, this distinction is not due to a distance between Creator and creature but is the same kind of distinction that prevails inside the Godhead itself. The one who prays is no more separated from God than any one of the Persons of the Godhead is separated from the others. And similarly, the one who prays—in the highest union—is united with all the Divine Persons as they are united with one another.<sup>21</sup>

(To be concluded)

21. 'even as thou, Father, art in me, and I in thee, that they also may be in us.' John 17:21.

## TWO VRNDAVANA GOSVAMINS: RAGHUNĀTHA-DĀSA AND RAGHUNĀTHA BHATTA

PROF. RANJIT KUMAR ACHARJEE

Bengal Vaiṣṇavism derives much of its strength and vitality from the devotional and theological literature developed by the Vṛndāvana Gosvāmins. But all the six Vṛndāvana Gosvāmins had not contributed in equal measure towards the formulation and enrichment of the metaphysics, practice and social codes of Vaiṣṇavism. It is well-known that the doctrinal basis of the sect was founded principally by Sanātana, Rūpa and Jīva. Among these three Gosvāmins, Sanātana and Rūpa developed the theory of of *rasa* and brought the basic tenets of Vaiṣṇava theology within the conceptual framework of Caitanyaism, and Jīva strengthened the philosophical foundation of this school. Gopāla Bhatta is believed to have codified Vaiṣṇava ritualism. The remaining two Gosvāmins, Raghunātha-dāsa and Raghunātha Bhatta, are equally held in high esteem and reverence as teachers, not so much for their scholastic

pursuits or profundity of thought, for they did not write much, but solely for their austerity and modesty, passionate devotion and saintly character. They practised what Caitanya taught, and thus set personal examples worthy of emulation by all those who are interested in the spiritual quest, in accordance with the ideals of Caitanyaism in particular.

### *Raghunātha-dāsa*

Raghunātha-dāsa's life presents a shining example of the renunciation of worldly wealth, power and fortune for the sake of spiritual advancement. Born with a silver spoon in his mouth in a *kāyastha* family of Saptagrām in the district of Hooghly (West Bengal), from his boyhood he showed no inclination to a life of ease, luxury and sensuous enjoyment. He was the only son of Govardhan Majumdar, a rich landlord of

Saptagrām who enjoyed a princely income of twelve lakhs of rupees per annum. Though the exact date of birth of Raghunāth-dāsa is not known, old records indicate that he was certainly a junior contemporary of Śrī Caitanya. (1486-1533 A.D.) Raghunātha received the close attention and affection of all the members of his family, as he was the only son in a wealthy joint-family of two brothers; Govardhan and elder Hiranya. He was brought up in an environment of plenty and luxury but strangely enough, Raghunātha, who was the only heir to the vast fortune, showed clear and unmistakable inclinations towards religious life and practices from his very boyhood. Evidently this proved disquieting to his parents and uncle. His innate religious tendencies were enkindled and intensified when he came into close contact with the pious and highly spiritual personality of Saint Haridāsa at Saptagrām. Raghunātha was greatly impressed by the saintly character and spiritually powerful personality of Haridāsa which aroused his dormant desire for asceticism and renunciation. He had the opportunity of serving Haridāsa with all sincerity and devotion. Haridāsa blessed him heartily

With the passage of time, his strong inner urge for leading a pious life showed no sign of retardation. On the contrary, it deepened and intensified. Naturally this made his father apprehensive and he tried the time-old technique for distracting him by arranging his marriage with a charming young girl at a comparatively young age of seventeen. But this produced no perceptible effect in Raghunātha's attitude to life. Caitanya embraced sannyasa in the year 1510 A.D. He was being hailed as a great emancipator of mankind, and people in large numbers turned to his 'religion of love' for solace and peace. Raghunātha came to know all about it and felt a passionate longing to have the pious company of Caitanya. Caitanya paid a visit to the venerable Advaita's house at Sāntipur. In

his eagerness to meet Caitanya, Raghunātha left for Sāntipur. Advaitācārya knew young Raghunātha well and was aware of his devotional and ascetic temperament. Advaita received him with all affection and love. Raghunātha's long-cherished desire was fulfilled; he obtained Caitanya's affection and blessing. Again on the occasion of Caitanya's visit to Sāntipur on his way to Rāmakeli, Raghunātha met Caitanya for the second time and expressed his desire to renounce the worldly life and also to accompany him to Puri. Caitanya, however, forbade him not to do so at that moment, for he realized that the time for his renunciation had not yet ripened. On the contrary, Caitanya advised him to perform all the obligatory family and social duties in a disinterested manner and assured him that at the appropriate moment he would certainly obtain the grace of Kṛṣṇa.<sup>1</sup>

Raghunātha returned home as a radically changed man and he found it difficult to resume his normal household duties. His paternal residence appeared to be a dungeon to him, and he made several attempts to escape from it which were, however, foiled by the guards engaged by his apprehensive father. Raghunātha realized that Nityānanda's approval and blessing might make his spiritual quest fruitful. His meeting with Nityānanda at Pānihāti, a place not far off from Calcutta, stimulated his spiritual longings considerably. A significant as well as interesting event occurred during this meeting which is still commemorated by the devout Vaiṣṇavas through an annual festival called *Dandamahotsava*.<sup>2</sup> A detailed

1. Kṛṣṇadāsa Kavirāja. *Caitanya-Caritāmṛta*. Madhyalīlā-Chapter 16. Edited by Harekrishna Mukhopadhyaya & S. C. Majumdar. (Calcutta, Dev sahitya Kutir. 1979) P. 514.

2. Sri Ramakrishna attended this festival at Panihati several times, and the *Kathāmṛta* (*The Gospel of Sri Ramakrishna*) gives a vivid account of the Master's ecstatic participation in it.

account of it has been given in the *Caitanya-Caritāmṛta*, Antya-līlā, chapter VI. Perceiving Raghunātha's latent desire for ascetic life while outwardly engaged in matters mundane, Nityānanda laughingly called him a 'deceiver', and ordered him to feed all the assembled Vaiṣṇavas, as a 'punishment'. Evidently this 'punishment' was a boon to young Raghunātha. He arranged a sumptuous feast and distributed huge sums of money to the Vaiṣṇavas present on that occasion. It is said that people hailing from different classes of the society participated in the function which virtually turned into an inter-community feast. Many modern scholars suggest that by arranging such an inter-community feast Nityānanda took a most daring step in the caste-ridden, conservative society of Bengal. He sought to demolish the caste barriers especially in religious matters so as to usher in an era of social equality and brotherhood. This can well be considered to be the most significant contribution of Nityānanda to the Caitanya Movement.<sup>3</sup> *Caitanya-Caritāmṛta* further states that Raghunātha dāsa begged for Nityānanda's blessings so that he might attain the grace of Caitanya—a long-cherished dream he had nourished from boyhood. Nityānanda was really overwhelmed by the rare modesty and purity of his character and also by the sincerity of his purpose and singlemindedness in his devotion. He along with the other Vaiṣṇavas present there wholeheartedly wished the speedy fulfilment of his intense desire.<sup>4</sup>

Raghunātha returned home thereafter. But the pangs of the separation from his dear Master, Sri Caitanya was too much for him to bear, and he was constantly seeking a suitable opportunity to free himself from the vile

servitude to the domestic life. Apprehending his possible escape, his father tightened the security measures. His movements were restricted and he was virtually made a prisoner in his own house. But as the divine dispensation would have it, one day the opportunity came and he escaped the vigilance of his apprehensive father, renouncing, as Kṛṣṇadāsa Kavirāja informs us, wealth befitting Indra and his *apsarā*-like wife. His desire for meeting Caitanya was so deep and intense that he cared not a bit for the hardships of such a long journey on foot. He avoided the main public thoroughfare for fear of being noticed by those known to him or to his father. Bearing all sorts of physical hardships, thirst, hunger and sleeplessness, Raghunātha reached the holy town of Puri after twelve days and offered himself as a flower at the feet of Śrī Caitanya. Needless to mention, he was warmly welcomed by Caitanya and immediately admitted into the community of his intimate associates. Svarūpa Dāmodara, a close associate of Caitanya at Puri and well-versed in Vaiṣṇava theory and practice, was entrusted with the task of imparting appropriate religious training to him.

Raghunātha-dāsa epitomized modesty and sincerity, and his inclination towards asceticism was undoubtedly keen and deep. After some days, he started begging alms in front of the main gate of Jagannātha temple which also enabled him to have glimpses of Lord Jagannātha. All the while, he went on reciting devotedly the Lord's name. In a short time he learnt Vaiṣṇava theology and the fundamentals of Vaiṣṇava discipline under the able guidance of Svarūpa Dāmodara. But in order to have the Master's own instructions on religious practices, Raghunātha once entreated Caitanya, through Svarūpa Dāmodara, to enlighten and advise him the right course of spiritual advancement. In reply Caitanya said that in addition to what had been

3. G. S. Roychoudhury: *Śrī Caitanya-adeva O Tāhār Pāṣadgaṇa* (Bengali) (Calcutta: Calcutta University, 1957) pp. 90-93

4. *Caitanya-Caritāmṛta*: Antya-līlā. Chapter vi. P. 530.



taught, he should bear in mind the following cardinal maxims :

'Listen not to distracting words about worldly matters, nor participate in such a conversation. Take not rich, delicious food pleasant to the tongue, nor wear costly and attractive garments. Respect the persons who are to be respected. And recite Kṛṣṇa's holy name without any interruption. In remembrance, worship and offer obeisance to Rādhā-Kṛṣṇa as if you were in Vraja (Vṛndāvana).'<sup>5</sup> In essence, this is what had been taught in Caitanya's own beautiful poem *Śikṣāṣṭaka*— a collection of eight Sanskrit verses containing his simple and passionate faith.

As days passed by, Raghunātha's tendency towards extreme austerity and asceticism intensified and inflamed, and he endeavoured to translate Caitanya's teachings into practice. He gave up begging at the temple gate, as he felt that it had not been heartily approved by Caitanya. Also giving up the practice of begging from door to door, Raghunātha collected rotten and decomposed residues of prasāda (food offered to Lord Jagannātha) from the drains and took them with a little salt, and that too only once a day. Being moved by his extraordinary austerity and exemplary asceticism, Caitanya blessed him and made a gift of a *Govardhana-śilā*, a dark-coloured stone used as a symbol of Kṛṣṇa which he himself had worshipped, and a *gunja-mālā* (rosary) which he himself had used for his Japa on Kṛṣṇa. Raghunātha realized the spiritual significance of the gifts, and throughout his life he worshipped the *Govardhana-śilā* with elaborate service and unflinching devotion. He had the privilege of serving Caitanya for sixteen long years as his close attendant and of observing the depth, beauty and sublimity of Caitanya-*līlā* at close quarters. During the last twelve years of his life, Caitanya spent his days in an

ecstatic state of divine inebriation (*premon-māda*) and became incapable of taking care of himself. Svarūpa Dāmodara, Raghunātha-dāsa and other intimate disciples took care of the Master with loving solicitude.

After the passing away of Caitanya and Svarūpa Dāmodara, Raghunātha-dāsa left Puri for Vṛndavana where he joined Rūpa and Sanātana. But he was so overwhelmed with grief at the demise of Caitanya that he even went to the extent of attempting to kill himself by jumping down from the Govardhan mountain.<sup>6</sup> Sanātana and Rūpa, however, successfully persuaded him not to take such a step. With loving care and tenderness they accepted him as their younger brother. At Vṛndavana he led a self-imposed life of extreme austerity and asceticism. The *Caitanya-Caritāmṛta* tells us that Raghunātha embodied in himself innumerable noble qualities. Caitanya himself is said to have admired the rare Vaisṇava qualities of his character and acknowledged the depth and intensity of his devotion. He used to spend the major part of the day in uninterrupted remembrance of the Lord, recitation of His Holy Name. He slept only for a short while, tasted no delicious food, and ate just enough for bare subsistence. He clothed himself like a destitute. He also found delight in narrating the wonderful religious fervour manifested in the later years of Caitanya's life at Puri. All through his life, he scrupulously adhered to the instructions imparted by the Master.<sup>7</sup> Kavi Karnapur in his *Caitanya-Candrodaya* aptly observes that all these qualities assembled together made Raghunātha the perfect embodiment of renunciation.

According to *Viśva-kośa*, Raghunātha-

<sup>6</sup>. *Viśva-Kosa*—A Bengali Encyclopaedia. Vol 16. Edited by N. C. Basu (Calcutta) P. 140. Also. *Bhakta-Carita-Mālā* (Bengali) by Sashi Bhusan Basu (Calcutta: Indian Publishing House, 1918) P. 170.

<sup>7</sup>. *Caitanya-Caritāmṛta*: Antya-līlā. Chapter vi. P. 537.

dāsa lived at a place adjacent to Govardhana during the first part of his Vṛndavana days, and reclaimed Rādhā-Kuṇḍa and Śyāma-Kuṇḍa, two important spots associated with Kṛṣṇa-līlā.<sup>8</sup> It is said that he spent the last days of his life near Rādhā-Kuṇḍa till his death at the ripe age of 85 years. Dr. S. K. De writes 'From his *Vraja-vilāsa-stava*, it appears that he became blind in his old age and his *Dāna-keli-cintāmaṇi* was composed after he had become blind.'<sup>9</sup> In his old age, he had the constant company of and sincere service from Kṛṣṇadāsa Kavirāja, who along with Rūpa and Sanātana learnt from him the minutest details of Caitanya-līlā at Puri which constituted a major portion of the subject-matter of the *Caitanya-Caritāmṛta*. However, the Bengali encyclopaedia *Viśva-kośa* gives a different version of the closing years of his life. Raghunātha, so goes the narration, returned to Puri after the demise of Rūpa and Sanātana and breathed his last there.<sup>10</sup> But this seems to be most unlikely, for it might be reasonably asserted that after the passing away of Caitanya and Svarūpa Dāmodara, Puri had no special attraction for him other than Lord Jagannātha. Furthermore, it was not feasible in his old age to undertake such an arduous journey on foot from Vṛndāvana to Puri.

Raghunātha-dāsa was the only non-Brahmin religious guide among the six Gosvāmins, but for that reason, he was not less respected in the Vaiṣṇava society. The religion of love promulgated by Caitanya seeks to emphasize that religion should not be the exclusive possession of any particular community. 'Caitanya never, for instance, encouraged any particular caste or person to have the monopoly of the function of a spiritual guide or teacher, himself select-

ing men like Rūpa, Sanātana and Raghunātha-dāsa for the task of propagating the faith.'<sup>11</sup>

Raghunātha-dāsa had no special aptitude for the composition of any theological or metaphysical treatise. Nevertheless, he was endowed with some literary capacity and he composed in lucid Sanskrit some lyrical hymns, *stavas* or *stotras*, numbering about twenty-nine which were compiled together under the title *Stavāvali* or *Stavamālā*. Some of these *stavas* were composed in praises of Chaitanya (*Caitanya-Stava* and *Gourāṅga-Stava-Kalpataru*), while others deal with certain aspects of Kṛṣṇa-līlā at Vṛndavana. Dāsa-Gosvāmin's another work which deserves some consideration is his *Mukta-carita*, a Sanskrit *kāvya* of campu-type written in prose and occasional verse. Its subject matter is Kṛṣṇa's early sports at Vṛndāvana and its ultimate object is to establish the superiority of Kṛṣṇa's free love for Rādhā over his wedded love for Satyabhāmā. Another small work entitled *Dāna-keli-cintāmaṇi* was composed obviously in the line of Rūpa's *Dāna-keli-kaumudī* portraying an imaginary account of the *dāna-līlā* of Rādhā-Kṛṣṇa. Both these small lyrical works deal with the two erotic episodes relating to Kṛṣṇa's Vṛndavana-līlā. Scholars have not commended Raghunātha's compositions for their superior literary quality. 'The purely poetic merit of these *stavas* cannot be estimated very highly, but their evident erotic mysticism, consisting of deeply emotional spiritualization of sensuous forms, gives them a rich and luscious charm and a sweet ring of passion, which bear a striking testimony to an interesting feature of Bengal Vaiṣṇavism.'<sup>12</sup> Raghunātha-dāsa was and still is respected as one of the Six Vṛndāvana Gosvāmins not so much for his literary achievements as for his rare sacrifice, extraordinary modesty, severe

8. *Viśva-Kośa*. Vol. 16. P. 140.

9. Dr. S. K. De. *Early History of Vaiṣṇava Faith and Movement in Bengal* (Calcutta: Firma KLM, 1961) P. 121.

10. *Viśva-Kośa*. Vol. 16. P. 141.

11. *Early History* P. 108.

12. *Ibid.* P. 122.

asceticism and, above all, for his intense love for the Lord.

### *Raghunātha Bhatta*

Another Vṛndāvana Gosvāmin, who like Dāsa Gosvāmin did not influence the doctrinal trend of the Vaiṣṇavism through any theological or metaphysical contributions, is Raghunātha Bhatta (Bhattacharya). Bhatta Gosvāmin was the son of Tapan Miśra, whom Caitanya had met during his journey in East Bengal in his pre-sannyāsa days. Tapan Miśra, a pious Brahmin, was an inhabitant of Rāmpur, a village on the bank of the river Padmā (now in Bangladesh). Miśra accepted Caitanya as his guru and Caitanya is said to have instructed him about all the subtleties of sādhanā. As advised by Caitanya, the entire Miśra family settled down at Benaras permanently. Raghunātha Bhatta was born in 1505 A.D. (Saka 1427).<sup>13</sup> Nothing much is known about his boyhood days, for most of the biographers of Caitanya are silent about Raghunātha Bhatta. Murāri Gupta mentions him and Kṛṣṇadāsa Kavirāja devotes a small portion of the *Caitanya-Caritāmṛta* to him. (Antya-līlā, chapter 13). It is said that Caitanya frequented Tapan Miśra's residence during his stay at Benaras on his way to and back from Vṛndavana.<sup>14</sup> At that time, Raghunātha was a mere boy, but the charm of Caitanya's magnetic personality and devotional fervour had drawn the boy Raghunātha towards him. He served Caitanya with deep devotion in all possible ways, and it is said that Caitanya bestowed his grace on the boy. Later developments in the boy's life induce us to presume that Caitanya had implanted in him the seed of devotional love which subse-

quently sprouted into a full grown tree with rich foliage. Further, it might be assumed that Raghunātha accepted Caitanya as his guru, though there exists no tangible evidence to establish Raghunātha's direct initiation by Caitanya.

After some years, Raghunātha met the Master at Puri whom he served in different ways. He was an adept in cooking, and himself cooked good dishes with utmost care and devotion for Caitanya. He stayed at Puri for eight months and then returned home at the Master's behest. The Master instructed him to look after his aged parents and also to study *Śrīmad-Bhāgavata*, the Bible of the Vaiṣṇavas. The Master advised him not to enter into wedlock. After four years, on the death of his parents, he again visited Puri and stayed with the Master for eight months. Thereafter, he was directed by Caitanya to join Rūpa and Sanātana at Vṛndavana, where he spent the last days of life. Caitanya had given him a *tulsi* rosary which he cherished and used all through his life. The author Kṛṣṇadāsa Kavirāja tells us that Raghunātha Bhatta had a melodious voice and that he used to recite *Śrīmad-Bhāgavata* devotedly and melodiously.<sup>15</sup> As a matter of fact, he introduced a novel mode of reciting this holy scripture. The narratives of the *Bhāgavata* would become vivid and animated by his new mode of reading. It is said that Rūpa used to take delight in listening to his reading of the scripture. In all his discourses on *Śrīmad-Bhāgavata*, Bhatta Gosvāmin adopted the Caitanyaite line of interpretation. It is well-known that the Master regarded *Śrīmad-Bhāgavata* as the correct and detailed commentary on the *Brahma-sūtra*, the fountain-head of Vedānta Philosophy. Raghunātha Bhatta does not appear to have left any work. His life was not so eventful at least on its surface. Still, he is even now honoured as a great

13. *Viśva-Kosa* Vol. 16 P 141

14. Sri Harekrishna Mukhopadhyaya *Gauḍīya Vaiṣṇava Sādhana* (Bengali) (Calcutta: 1970) P. 117.

15. *Caitanya-Caritāmṛta* Antya-līlā. Chapter 13. P. 577.

Vaiṣṇava apostle and is included in the galaxy of Vṛndavana Gosvāmins on account of certain rare qualities of his radiant personality which are still cherished by each and every Vaiṣṇava devotee. He passed

away probably in the year 1579 A.D. (Saka 1501).<sup>16</sup>

16. *Viśva-Kosa* Vol. 16. P. 142.

## REVIEWS AND NOTICES

**CONTEMPORARY INDIAN PHILOSOPHY:**  
Edited by T. M. P. MAHADEVAN and GRACE E. CAIRNS. Published by the World Press Private Ltd., 37 A College Street, Calcutta-700 073. 1977 Pp xi+311 Rs 50

Here is a significant publication blazing a new trail in the hitherto untrodden terrain of Indian philosophy. The great thinkers of ancient India who attained lofty spiritual heights in their quest for Truth evidently did not consider the temporal process of history worthy of attention. So a philosophy of history finds no place in the monumental systems of thought they erected. It is gratifying to note, therefore, that the volume under review worthily fills the lacuna in our ancient philosophical systems.

Twelve eminent philosophers of the contemporary age, in addition to the two learned editors, have contributed penetrating essays on the march of history, each from his or her own standpoint. All shades of philosophic outlook are brought to bear upon the historical process, and the result is a collection of essays on the philosophy of history from the standpoint of Indian thought, presented to the world of scholarship for the first time.

The advaita Vedantic view of history is ably expounded by Swami Adiswarananda (page 21-58), Dr. T. M. P. Mahadevan (201-232) and Dr. D. M. Dutta (115-134). A renowned Samkarite upholding the absolutistic view, Dr. MAHADEVAN achieves the difficult task of finding a place for the temporal processes in the timeless Reality. Time, he says, is the gateway to Reality which is timeless, and the goal of history is the realization of Mokṣa on a cosmic scale. Historical processes have to be interpreted in this light.

SWAMI ADISWARANANDA expounds the Cyclic Theory against a background of the Christian providential, the Hegelian idealistic, and the

humanistic linear views. According to the Swamiji, phenomena recur in each of the cycles. There is no such things as progress, but only change (p. 38). As a result of this cyclic view, the Swamiji declares, man is a mere spectator of history and not a participator. The historical process is an incident in the phenomenal realm which is an expression of God's Līlā or Māyā. The goal of life is Self-realization.

DR. D. M. DUTTA stresses moral values in the historical processes. He uses the Law of Karma in his interpretation of human evolution in the March of History.

Two interpretations of history from the integral standpoint are presented by GRACE E. CAIRNS (p. 20) and PROF. HARIDAS CHAUDHURI. Though called by the same name, the two expositions are very different from each other. The former is based on Sri Aurobindo's philosophy. History on this view, is directed towards the goal of attaining Integral Supramental Consciousness. Man is a free participator in this process. And hence any interpretation in history has necessarily to be psychological. Professor Chaudhuri, on the other hand, has pressed together the diverse theories of evolution, ancient Indian and modern European, and shows that history is a phase of evolution which in its turn is a facet of the philosophy of the whole cosmos. He also demonstrates that all interpretations of history are matters of insight and of creative imagination and hence subjective.

A study of history on the basis of a philosophy of values is attempted by PROFESSOR A. G. JAVADEKAR (p.187-200). History is a process of realization of eternal values, and would ultimately point to something greater and beyond the values themselves, namely Truth which is the bedrock of all values.

PROF. J. N. MOHANTY (p. 251-262) analyses those aspects of Indian thought which made it impossible for our philosophers to concern

themselves with history. On the basis of this analysis, he determines the conditions necessary and sufficient for generating a genuine Philosophy of History.

PROF. N. A. NIKAM's essay (p. 265-277) is an elucidation of the metaphysics of the idea of history. History deals with the past and is a regressive perspective of time. A Philosophy of History according to him is essentially a philosophy of *action* and not of thought.

'Social Revolution' is the central theme of PROF. KALIDAS BHATTĀCHARYA (p. 59-92). This may seem to be a deviation from the main theme of the book, but it is justified. The significance of social revolution and progress as expounded by Hegel and Marx are given, and it is contended by the Professor that Sāṃkhya, Yoga and Tantra too are concerned with revolution. True it is they speak of revolution in the spiritual realm. Why not link this with revolution in the mundane social realm? The Professor shows what happens when this linking is done.

The volume under review was ostensibly meant to confine itself to the philosophical consideration of history. Yet, other aspects of history have not been ignored. Facts of history presented by PROF. DHIRENDRA SHARMA (p. 295-311) are shocking and revealing. His reflections thereon are galvanizing. And his bold declaration (imitating Marx) that it is more important to change history than to write it or analyse it (p. 308) leaves us with a sense of disappointment.

PROF. BIMAL KRISHNA MATILAL (p. 233-247) surprises us by his declaration that the application of the metaphysical systems to the interpretation of history is neither interesting nor important (p. 236). Still he employs the ideas of Karma and Samsāra to give his own interpretation.

PROF. V. V. DESHPANDE (p. 135-166) goes beyond the pale of the Philosophy of History and discusses the Itihāsa-Purāṇa literature of our land and the need for taking them to the doors of our villagers. PROF. B. G. GOKHALE (p. 147-185) advocates, in his essay, the writing of Indian history on a new pattern suggested by him.

There are three separate groups of essays in this marvellous book. The first is concerned with purely philosophical aspects of history comprising the contributions of the Editors, Swami Adiswarananda, Professors Haridas Chaudhuri, D. M. Dutta, A. G. Javadekar, J. N. Mohanty and N. A. Nikam. The second

group is of a semi-philosophical nature including the writings of Professors Kalidas Bhattacharya, B. K. Matilal and Dharendra Sharma. The third group includes the purely historical, mostly non-philosophical expositions of Professors V. V. Deshpande, B. G. Gokhale, and S. K. Saksena. Each group presents marvellously fresh and invigorating ideas worth deep consideration by our scholars. However, taking the main purpose of the Editors into consideration, the first group deserves special attention. The reviewer feels that this dominant group has laid the philosophic foundations, well and truly, for an interpretation of the meaning, purpose and goal of human history. The superstructure, similar to what Hegel has achieved, has to be erected. The basic or foundational concepts of Indian philosophy have to be employed to interpret the history of India, and other countries of the world. The reviewer hopes that the learned Editors would launch on this task and give us a companion volume to the one under review.

This book, as a significant and valuable addition to the extant literature on the Philosophy of History, should be in the hands of all student and teachers of philosophy in our country. But for this a cheaper edition will have to be brought out.

PROF. P. S. NAIDU

*Professor of Philosophy (Rtd.)*

*Universities of Allahabad, Rajasthan and Agra*

MYTH, SYMBOL AND LANGUAGE (*A Vivekananda Perspective*). BY 'ANANDA Rama-krishna Mission Seva Pratisthan, Calcutta-700 029 1980 Pp 204.

Myth is not a fable or fiction. It is the expression of an experience, sacred, exemplary and significant, as Mircea Eliade understands it. By knowing the myth, one knows the origin of things. Symbol, on the other hand, participates in Reality in a cognizable fashion. Paul Tillich's analogy of the national flag is instructive in the study of symbology. Language is as it were the hand of the mind, a vehicle of ideas. It is the best show man puts on. It is the expression of the divinity in man; a gift of God. Words take us from the myth-making phase of human mentality to the state of logical thought and conception of facts.

The author of the long 'essay' under review, a monk of the Ramakrishna Order, develops a

philosophy of language found in the writings of Swami Vivekananda in the light of the global researches in the field. He tries to show the significance of the statements of the great prophet-philosopher for a proper understanding of Indian religion and culture. For Swami Vivekananda the entire universe is a symbol and God is the essence behind. According to him neither symbol nor language could be created. The *nāma-rūpa* as he calls them, are inseparable and beginningless like the Veda. He upholds the Śabda-Brahman theory of language which is neither the result of convention nor of a contract. Language and Reality are one.

If myths, symbols and language are studied in the proper perspective (and the author chooses for his perspective the writings of Swami Vivekananda), some apparent contradictions could be resolved. If we keep in view the fundamental thesis of Swamiji that there is difference only of degree between the language of a philosopher and the utterance of a baby we shall resolve the contradictions of the texts—sacred or secular. Swami Vivekananda strongly holds that all mythologies contain nuggets of truth and all polished phrases contain trash. There is relativity of truth on phenomenal plane.

The book is an important contribution to the study of the philosophy of language. But the running exposition of the theme without division into chapters creates difficulties to a common reader. The presentation could be more readable if classified and edited by some academician or by the author himself.

DR. S. P. DUBEY, M. A., M.A., PH. D.  
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Jabalpur

YOGA NIDRA: BY SWAMI SATYANANDA SARASWATI. Bihar School of Yoga, Monghyr. Bihar 811 201. 1982 Pp. 284 Rs. 40.

'That Nidra which is not a form of Prakṛiti but is the manifested form of Puruṣa' (*Yogatārāvali*, 26). The theme of this book is this special kind of sleep which is between the normal state of awareness and regular sleep. Drawing upon his own experience and his knowledge of the concerned techniques in the Yoga Sastra, Swamiji develops a special application of the principle of *yoga-nidra*, not only for spiritual purposes but also for tackling problems of mental health, tension, vital violence etc.

In this state of dynamic sleep there is no

pull of inertia and tamas; the consciousness is freed from external compulsions and the door is opened to the subliminal dimensions of the being. By special methods this state can be utilized 'to develop the memory, increase knowledge and creativity or transform one's nature (p. 2)'. The author calls it an aspect of Pratyahara; knowledge in this state is obtained without sensory medium. He mentions: 'In modern psychology, this has been termed the "hypnagogic state" but I prefer to call it the "hypnayogic state".'

There is a detailed account of the step-by-step processes that are employed by Swamiji and the results that have been obtained. In brief, there are seven steps: making the resolve of what one wants to do or be; rotation of consciousness from limb to limb or object to object as directed by the instructor; awareness of breath; relaxation of feelings and sensations which are awakened and neutralized with their opposites; visualization of images named by the instructor; repetition of the resolve, *sankalpa*; gradually bringing back the mind from the sleep to normal awareness.

It is interesting to read that 'Wolfgang von Goethe used the inspirations and intuitions from this state to solve problems arising in his work. In dreams occurring in this state, Kekule realized the circular molecular structure of benzene; Nobel laureate Niels Bohr saw the planetary structure of the atom, and Einstein accelerated his awareness to the speed of light in the famous "thought experiments" which led to the theory of relativity.' (P. 8)

This treatment opens up immense possibilities which it would be worthwhile to pursue. There is a practice in some parts of our country of reading out from some holy texts like the Gita or Ramayana while putting a child to sleep and even after the child goes to sleep. It helps to form the right *samskāras*, as the consciousness goes on absorbing the vibrations of the reading. Obviously the principle is the same as of *yoga-nidra*.

SRI M. P. PANDIT  
Sri Aurobindo Ashram  
Pondicherry

#### SANSKRIT—ENGLISH

SRIMAD BHAGAVATA VOL I (*Skandhas* 1—4): TRANSLATED BY SWAMI TAPASYANANDA. Published by Sri Ramakrishna Math, Mylapore, Madras 600 004, 1980. Pp. XLVI + 455. Rs. 100,

*Śrīmad Bhāgavatam* occupies a unique position among the Purāṇas. It is not only the fount of the Bhakti doctrine but is also the quintessence of Vedānta, *sarvavedāntasāram*. By being conversant with the teachings of *Śrīmad Bhāgavatam*, one practically gets hold of all the essential teachings of Indian spiritual tradition. Swami Tapasyanandaji is, therefore, to be congratulated for making this priceless treasure available in English translation, and he deserves unstinted praise for taking upon himself this arduous and colossal task; which he hopes to complete in four volumes, of which the first one has just come out in print.

The translator has given precedence to readability over meticulous accuracy in his translation, as he himself has stated in the preface. Though he modestly disclaims Sanskrit scholarship, his work shows a thorough grasp of the essential spirit of the text, and he has also been successful in conveying it through a very lucid and free rendering. But in some places, the translation may appear misleading. For instance, the translation of verse 5 in Chapter 15 of the 1st Skandha (p. 65) as 'betrayed by Hari, whom I took to be a friend' may convey the wrong impression that Arjuna, who utters this verse, realizes after the demise of Krishna that the latter was not a friend to him in the true sense of the term, though he had taken him to be so. In fact what is conveyed by the word *vañcita* in this verse is repeated by the word *rahita* in verse 20 and the meaning in both cases is 'bereft of' or 'without'. Without his friend Śrī Krishna, Arjuna feels absolutely helpless and powerless, being bereft of his only source of power, and this he conveys through his long lamentation. Similarly the translation of *sātvatām patih* in verse 14 of Chapter II (p. 7) as 'the master of all devotees' and again of *sātvatapungave* in verse 32 of Chapter IX (p. 41) as 'a noble scion of the Yadu clan' may lead to some confusion, as in both cases the meaning is the same. The translator, however, has done well in taking

liberties here and there to make the meaning more explicit to which no exception should be taken. For instance, he translates *prakṛtimupeyūṣi* as 'assumed his power of Yogamāyā', and *ratirastu me anavadyā* as 'unfailing and absolute devotion, which seeks not liberation even'. In such places as the above two instances, too literal a translation would not have conveyed the true sense, and the translator has done well in indulging in a little explanation over and above his translation.

Swami Tapasyanandaji has been highly successful in conveying the message of the *Bhāgavata* to the English-reading public by taking recourse to this method of free translation. He has also added, at the outset a very valuable, long general introduction, covering nearly 30 pages, where in eight sections he deals with numerous topics, such as the origin of the Purāṇas and the place of the *Bhāgavata* among them, the philosophical outlook of the *Bhāgavata*, problems of modern readers and others. Swami Tapasyanandaji has rendered a unique service through his illuminating presentation of the real nature of the Purāṇas, which should be read over and over again by the present-day readers 'who have been influenced by the modern scientific view of nature, universe and man'. He reminds us that 'the Purāṇas are not at all to be read as history and geography, nor are they to be regarded as fiction. They belong to an order different from both history and fiction. The Purāṇas are the upthrow of a people's mind struggling to express their quest for a meaning for a life and their findings in this respect' (p. XIV).

Both the printing and get-up are excellent, and there is no doubt that this new edition of *Śrīmad Bhāgavata* will find an honourable place in every library, public and private.

DR. GOVINDA GOPAL MUKHOPADHYAYA, M. A.,  
PH. D., SAMKHYA TIRTHA,  
Professor, Department of Sanskrit  
University of Burdwan

## NEWS AND REPORTS

### MAYAVATI CHARITABLE HOSPITAL

Report for April 1982 to March 1983

Advaita Ashrama, Mayavati, was started on 19 March 1899 under the inspiration of Swami

Vivekananda in the Kumaon Hills of the Himalayas. In 1903, a small dispensary was started by the Ashrama in response to the dire need of the local villagers in sickness. Since that time the dispensary has developed into a fairly well-equipped, small rural hospital. The

hospital stands within the precincts of the Ashrama, and is under the charge of a monastic member. A resident allopathic doctor treats the patients with the help of his assistants, and earnest efforts are made to maintain a high standard of efficiency in service. Moreover, all patients receive prompt and sympathetic treatment completely free of charge.

The hospital has 25 beds in the indoor department, but sometimes arrangements have to be made for more. There is also a small operation theatre. A dental chair and a pathological department provide additional help in the treatment of patients. The total number of patients treated during the year in the Indoor Department was 407, of which 321 were cured and discharged, 63 were relieved, 11 were discharged otherwise or left and 12 died. In the Outdoor Department, the total number of patients treated was 17,910, of which 5,386 were new and 12,524 were repeated cases.

*Our present immediate needs* (1) Providing fresh lockers to all the (25) beds in the Indoor Department. Rs 5,000. (2) Providing new mattresses, bed sheets, bed covers, and woollen blankets for all the beds Rs. 10,000. (3) Construction of a Dormitory for the attendants of patients. Rs 50,000 (4) Creation of a Permanent Fund for the purchase of medicines (To be invested in Long Term Fixed Deposit in a Scheduled Bank and interest only to be used for this purpose). Rs 5,00,000 Cheques and drafts may be drawn in favour of *Mayavati Charitable Hospital* and sent to the President, Mayavati Charitable Hospital, P O Mayavati, via Lohaghat, Dist Pithoragarh (U P.). 262-524, India.

## OBITUARY

With deep sorrow we have to announce the passing away of Swami Budhananda, Secretary, Ramakrishna Mission, New Delhi Branch on 11th June 1983 at 6 p.m. at the Ramakrishna Mission Seva Pratishthan, Calcutta. A few days ago he went to Belur Math, and became indisposed there with various ailments. He was admitted to the Seva Pratishthan where his condition took a serious turn following a cerebral stroke from which he never regained. The

immediate cause of death was cardio-respiratory failure in a case of cerebral haemorrhage. He was 66.

Born in 1917 in East Bengal. (now Bangladesh), the Swami was known in his pre-monastic life as Bhavan Prasad Dutta. He completed his graduation in 1939 from Dacca University and studied up to the final M. A. course without appearing for the examination. He joined the Order in 1944 at the Madras Math Centre and worked there till 1959 in various capacities, including the editorship of *Vedanta Kesari*. An initiated disciple of Swami Virajananda Maharaj, the Swami received sannyasa from Swami Sankarananda Maharaj in 1954. He was posted by the Headquarters to our Ramakrishna-Vivekananda Centre in New York, U.S.A. as Assistant Minister, in 1959 to preach Vedanta. He successfully conducted the work there and also in San Francisco and Hollywood Centres, for about seven years in all. He returned to India in 1966, and took up the responsibility of the Head of the Chandigarh Centre. In 1968 he came to Mayavati as the Joint Editor of *Prabuddha Bharata*, and in 1969 he was appointed President of Advaita Ashrama, Mayavati, as well as Editor of *Prabuddha Bharata*. In 1976 he was appointed Head of the Delhi Centre, as its Secretary, where he continued till the last.

Scholarly and contemplative by nature, the Swami has to his credit a number of books and articles, both in English and Bengali. *The Mind and Its Control, Can One be Scientific and yet Spiritual, The Saving Challenge of Religion* etc. are a few of his books that have gained admiration of both spiritual seekers and modern rational minds. His meticulous attention to details and profound erudition are the two of the distinctive features of his writings. His oratorical powers and organizing faculty are well proved by the grand success of the recent youth convention organized by him at New Delhi. Somewhat reserved, yet warm and affectionate, the Swami was respected and loved by all. His demise has created a void in the Ramakrishna-Vivekananda movement, and the Order has been deprived of the services of a fine monk. May his soul rest in peace!



## NOTES AND COMMENTS

### *The Spirit of Research*

Science in the true sense of the term is a way of life—the true way of life in the empirical world. It is not a mere technique or special activity carried out in a laboratory. True science is inseparable from the life of the scientist. A true scientist is one who *lives* science, who has converted his *whole* life into the pursuit of empirical truth.

The desire to know is there in all people ; curiosity is there even in monkeys. It is only when this natural urge to know is liberated from pleasure-seeking biological life and intensified beyond a certain threshold into an all absorbing search for a direct experience of true empirical reality does it become the discipline of science. The scientific search for reality is called research. This seeking is an expression of the evolutionary urge of the soul to transcend its limitations and attain higher states of existence, knowledge and happiness. Research may be linked to technology and economic prosperity, but its real motive power lies deep down in the consciousness of the scientist. It is the urge to evolve, to transcend, that constitutes the true spirit of research. In his inspiring autobiography *My Life With the Microbes* Dr. Selman Waksman, the discoverer of Streptomycin, quotes the words of his teacher T. B. Robertson on the spirit of research as follows. 'I earnestly hope that every student of science will become an ardent devotee of research and exponent of the spirit of research, for the spirit of research is that spirit which inquires for the purpose of making things better than they are, and which urges humanity toward higher purposes and more worthy achievements in every aspect of our lives. What, after all, is really worth doing in this life? If our object be merely to keep things going as they are, then, truly all the activities of mankind become virtually nothing more than house-keeping on a world-wide scale. We would grow food today that we might eat tomorrow, make clothes solely in order to wear them out, pass our lives in absolute subservience to our animal needs, earn merely what we spend and for spending's sake.'

There are hundreds of academic and industrial research institutes all over India, and thousands of men and women are working in them. But very few of these scientists are inspired by the true spirit of research. The vast majority of them have been pushed into the field of research either by the forces of economic necessity or by that all-pervasive tendency of educated Indians to seek cushy jobs. This explains why, in spite of enormous financial investment in science, important original contributions to its advancement have rarely been made in this country.

In this context an observation made by Prof. K. L. Chopra, a Bhatnagar Memorial Award winner, published in the *Science Reporter* of May 1977, deserves the consideration of all thoughtful Indians. 'Poor quality of scientific work in India has only a small connection with the lack of facilities. Primarily it is due to the lack of a scientific and technological culture, proper attitude, dedication and commitment on the part of the scientists working as a group... Research in science should be undertaken by only those who have the commitment and devotion of a deeply religious man.'

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## **SAURASHTRA FLOOD RELIEF-1983**

### **Appeal For Contribution**

Dear Friends,

It was almost a deluge due to severe storm and heavy rain on 21st and 22nd June 1983 in Saurashtra, especially in Junagadh district. Many areas remained unapproachable due to the great devastation. There has been heavy loss of human lives, property and cattle. The damage is colossal.

Shri Ramakrishna Ashrama, Rajkot immediately rushed its team of Swamis and volunteers to Shapur, Vanthali and other greatly affected villages with food packets, food grains, clothes, saris, utensils, bed sheets, carpets etc. Our food packets have been air-dropped by Government helicopters in unapproachable places like Porbandar and Ghed area. We are to continue the relief work and extend the same to other affected areas.

You have always been helping the holy cause of the Ashrama in times of such great calamities. Your ready response and hearty cooperation during Morvi dam disaster and Saurashtra Cyclone-1982 can never be forgotten.

We sincerely appeal to you again to extend your helping hand to the unfortunate brethren in this hour of natural calamity.

Earmarked contribution for the above relief in cash or kind shall be gratefully received and acknowledged. Cheque or Draft may be drawn in favour of 'SHRI RAMAKRISHNA ASHRAMA, RAJKOT'.

With hearty thanks and regards,

Yours sincerely,  
**Swami Vyomananda**  
President

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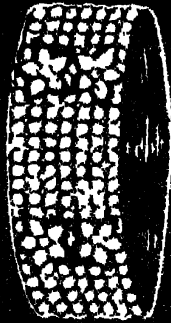
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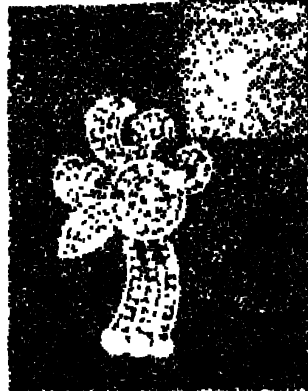
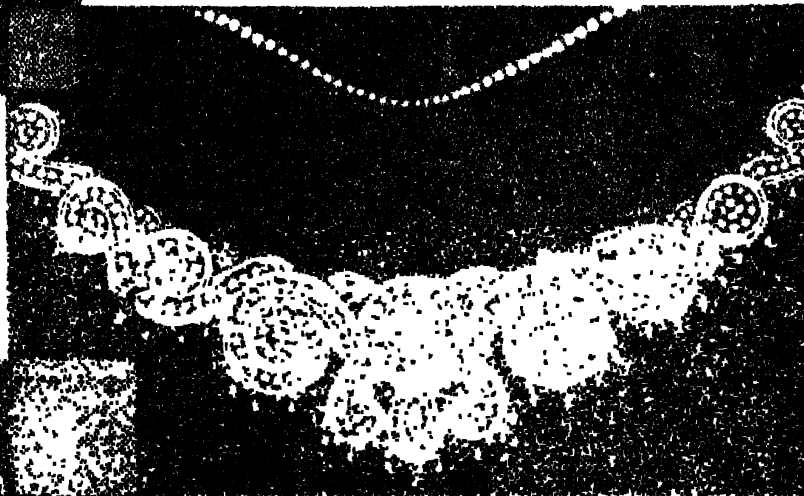
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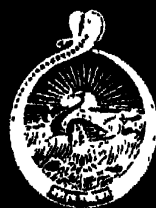
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AUGUST 1983

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AUGUST 1983

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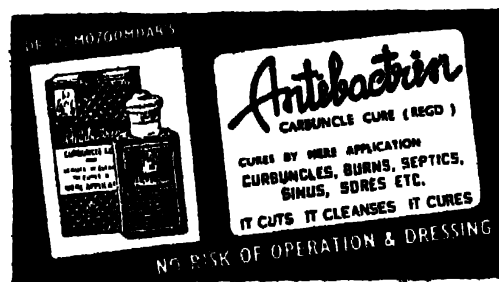
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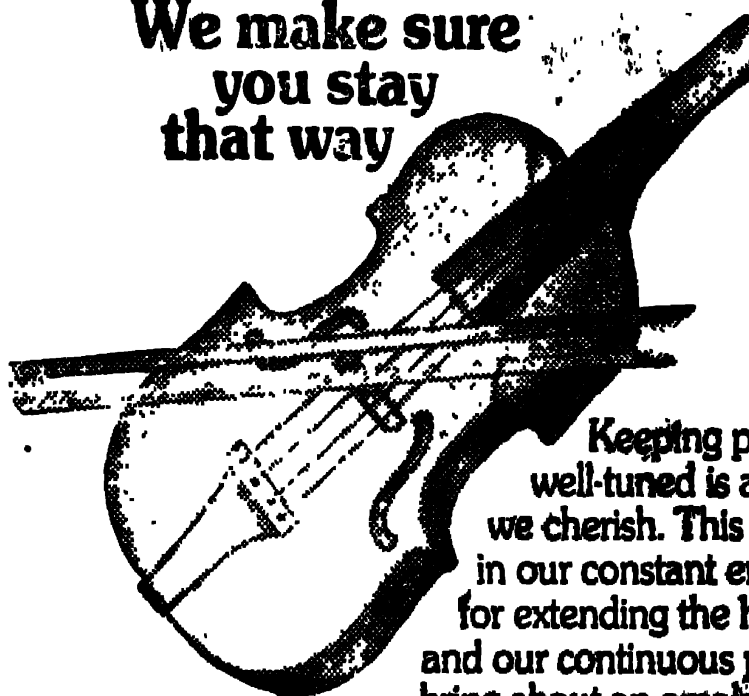
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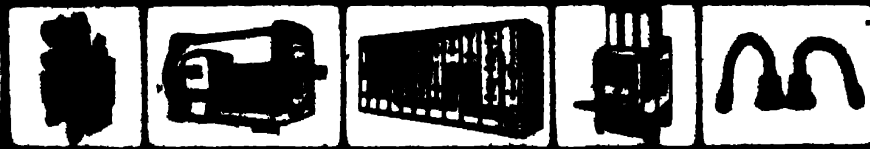
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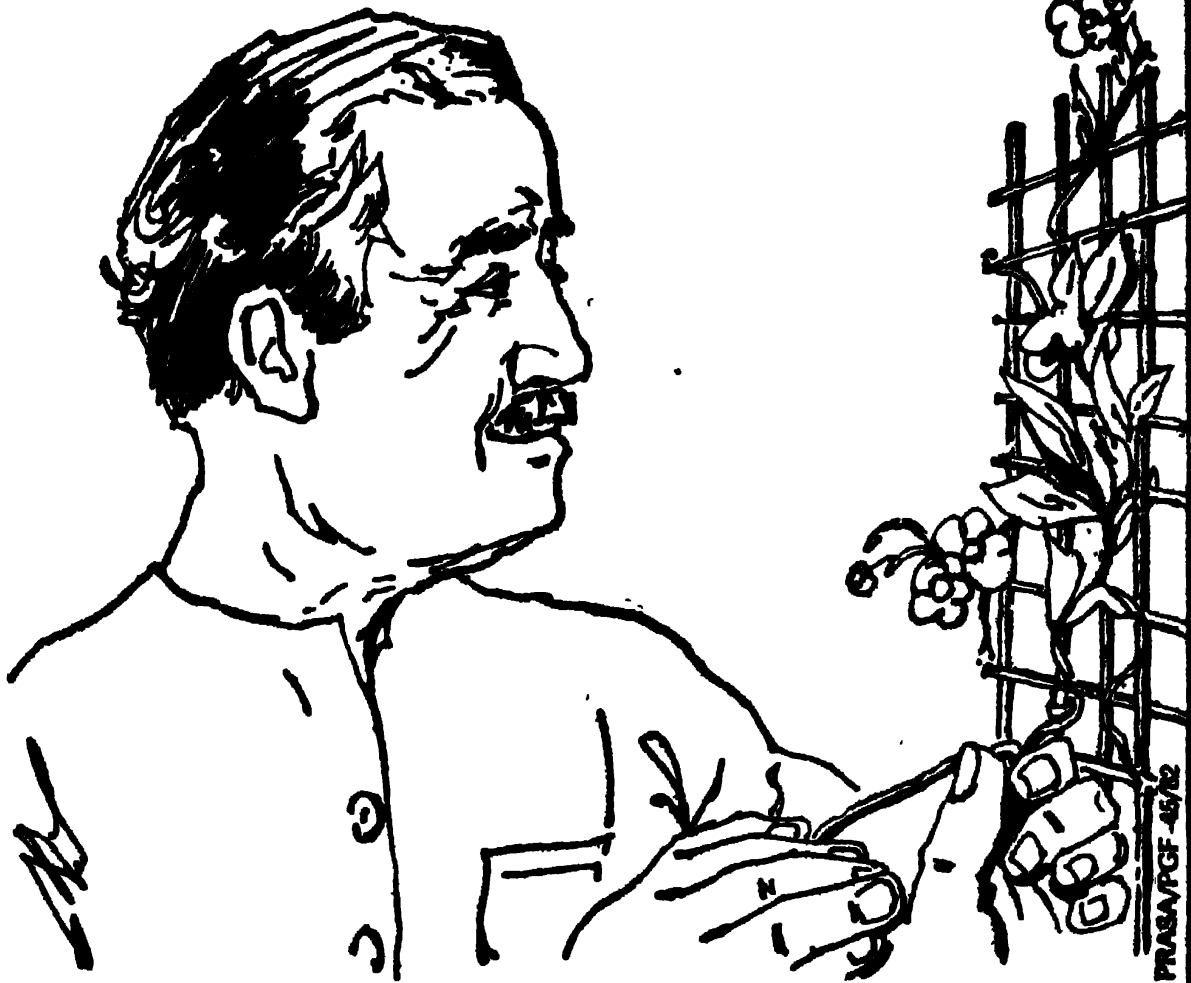
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# Prabuddha Bharata

VOL.

AUGUST 1983

No. 8

Arise ! Awake ! And stop not till the Goal is reached.

## INTEGRAL VISION OF VEDIC SEERS\*

*'Truth is one : sages call It by various names'*

सप्तास्यासन्परिधयस्त्रिः सप्त समिधः कृताः ।  
देवा यद्यज्ञं तन्वाना अबध्नन् पुरुषं पशुम् ॥

1 When the gods performed the sacrifice by binding the Puruṣa as the victim, the seven [metres] became the enclosures<sup>1</sup> and the twenty-one [categories] became the logs of fuel<sup>2</sup>

*Rg-Veda 10 90 15*

यज्ञं यज्ञमयजत देवास्तानि धर्माणि प्रथ-  
मान्यासन् ।  
ते ह नाक महिमान् सचंत यत्र पूर्वे साध्याः  
सन्ति देवाः ॥

2. Through the sacrifice the gods performed the sacrifice.<sup>3</sup> These became the first *dharmas*.<sup>4</sup> Through them [all those who perform the sacrifice] attain the heaven where dwell the gods known as Sādhyas.<sup>5</sup>

*Rg-Veda 10 90 16*

\* The concluding two stanzas of the *Puruṣa-sūkta*. Of the several interpretations of this hymn the Advaitic one adopted by Sāyaṇa has been followed here. According to it the hymn deals with two Puruṣa: the Primal Puruṣa (known as Hiraṇyagarbha) and the Virāt-Puruṣa. Another view is that there is only one Puruṣa, creating and sustaining all creation, and Virāt is only his body. Some people interpret the sacrifice of Puruṣa as man's self-sacrifice to the Divine.

1. In the actual Vedic sacrifice *paridhi* refers to the shallow trench dug around the altar to protect it from evil influences. Three trenches are dug around the *āhavanīya* fire and around the northern fire, and an imaginary one around the sun. Since the sacrifice here is a mental meditation done by the gods, according to Sāyaṇa, the seven *paridhis* stand for the seven Vedic metres (*chandas*) like Gāyatri, Anuṣṭubh, etc.

2. Sāyaṇa quotes *Taittirīya-Samhitā*, 5.1.10.3., to show that 'thrice-seven' means the twelve months, the five seasons, the three worlds and the sun.

3. According to Sāyaṇa the first *yajña* refers to the mental sacrifice of the gods, and the second *yajña* means the *Puruṣa* himself regarded as the sacrificial object. The statement may also mean 'sacrifice done for the sake of sacrifice' or 'duty for duty's sake'.

4. *Dharmāṇi* is usually translated as 'duties' or 'ethical codes'. Sāyaṇa interprets it as 'the main laws governing the evolution of the universe'.

5. The 'heaven' refers to the world of Virāt-Puruṣa, according to Sāyaṇa.

## ABOUT THIS NUMBER

This month's EDITORIAL discusses how all activities and meditation could be done as sacrifice.

In THE GOSPEL OF SRI RAMAKRISHNA AND THE LIFE OF M., Swami Prabhananda, a trustee of the Ramakrishna Math and Mission, shows that the *Kathāmṛta* is not merely an accurate record of the life and teachings of Sri Ramakrishna but a standing witness to the great transformation that these had brought about in the life of M himself

In the second instalment of INSIGHT AND MANIFESTATION Dr Beatrice Bruteau concludes her brilliant exposition of Christian prayer by revealing its dying

and life-transforming power which comes to the spiritual man when he attains maturity in prayer.

The second instalment of GIRISH CHANDRA GHOSH by Swami Chetanananda, head of the Vedanta Society of St. Louis, USA, brings home to our minds the redeeming power and unconditioned love of which Sri Ramakrishna was the embodiment.

Dr Donald Szantho Harrington, Senior Minister (Emeritus) of the Community Church of New York, gives a brief profile and central message of a great Jesuit palaeontologist and thinker in TEILHARD DE CHARDIN AND THE INVINCIBLE ENERGIES OF LOVE

## MEDITATION AND SACRIFICE—IV

(EDITORIAL)

### *Transcending the ego*

Life is a vast and inexhaustible stream of power, consciousness and joy. Every living being is an integral part of it. The microcosm (individual being) and the macrocosm (universal Being) have the same structure and are in dynamic contact with each other. All the nourishment for health, all the power for work, all the knowledge for the mind and all the happiness for the soul are there in the stream of universal Life. The more we open ourselves to the larger divine Life, the richer, greater, happier we become.

And yet, millions of people live in ill health, underdevelopment, powerlessness, fear and sorrow. The great medieval Indian saint Kabir sang, 'The washerman washes clothes in the river and yet is dying of

thirst'<sup>1</sup>. Though living in the midst of the abundance and fullness of life modern man remains empty and unfulfilled. Being isolated from the stream of life he is unable to open himself fully to it.

What is the cause of man's alienation from cosmic Life? There is no external wall cutting him off, no external obstacle blocking the way. The source of all sufferings, difficulties and sorrows is internal. The wall that separates the individual from cosmic life is within him; it is his own egoism. As Sri Ramakrishna has repeatedly stressed, egoism itself is bondage. The world has not bound us as we mistakenly think; there are no physical ropes tying us to the world. We are only bound by internal chains; we are bound, encapsulated, by the ego.

1. जल बीच धोबिया मरत पियासा रे ।

Egoism is of two types, the losing and the winning. A person who fails to achieve success in any field of life develops the losing type of egoism. He blames either God or other people for his misfortune. He clings to his sufferings instead of trying to get rid of them. He mistakenly thinks that the world owes him a living and that it is the duty of others to make him happy. He cuts himself off from the universal stream of life by creating a gloomy private world furnished with resentment, fear and grievances and populated by the distorted images of other people.

The person who attains success in the world develops the winning type of egoism. He does not blame God (if he happens to believe in Him) or other people; rather he exploits them to his advantage without giving them any credit for his success. He does not want to isolate himself from others, but they leave him alone. He drives himself too far off from the universal stream and thus gets cut off from it. His private world is built of ambition, greed, competition and worry.

Success and failure appear to be vastly different in the beginning but, as long as egoism persists, their ultimate result is the same—unfulfilment, unhappiness, *asāntih*.

Egoism is not mere ignorance. It is a form of reaction of the individual to the conditions of the external world. However, what originally began as an instinctual drive for self-preservation gradually becomes an unconscious resistance to the essential goodness of life. The losing ego resists success and prosperity, the winning ego resists failure and misfortune. It is this egoistic resistance to universal Life that manifests as stress in human life. Conflict, unhappiness, neurosis and psychosomatic disease are all products of stress. Merely turning to spiritual life as a religious duty does not solve the problem. As a matter of fact, when egoistic people practise Japa and meditation, these very practices may

intensify their unconscious resistance to universal Life and may make their life worse than it was before.

Egoism can be overcome only by something higher than the ego. The impulse for this effort must come from a higher source, which may be the Personal God, the Avatar, the Guru or one's own higher Self, the Atman. Blessed are those who come under the guidance of an illumined soul who removes their egoism through spiritual surgery. Some fortunate aspirants attain ego-transcendence through a spontaneous awakening of the Atman. A few others achieve it through intense prayer. In some people the stress of life goes on building up until it reaches a breaking point when the ego capsule cracks and they suddenly encounter universal Life. Many people need bitter experiences like a car accident, an acute illness, a friend's betrayal or a financial crisis to shatter the ego. However, such sudden changes are rare. For the vast majority of people ego-transcendence is a long-drawn-out process, and the only way to do it is to put the ego at the service of other people through Karma Yoga. Through unselfish service the ego has to be gradually re-educated and attuned to universal Life. This is the first step in spiritual life.

#### *Extension of consciousness*

Human personality is a complex structure. In the Upaniṣads it is described as consisting of five *kośas* or sheaths. These *kośas* are not like empty boxes or the storeys of a building. Each *kośa* is filled with consciousness and is a self in itself. Each of these *kośa*-selves has its own unique life and its own laws of development. Each is dependent for its life on a corresponding universe. Food for the *annamaya*-self comes from the physical universe; psychic energy for the *prāṇamaya*-self comes from the cosmic Prāṇa; knowledge for the *manomaya*-self comes from the cosmic mind; the consciousness

of the jivatman known as the *vijñānamaya*-self is a reflection of the Paramatman; the bliss of the *ānandamaya*-self is derived from the bliss of Brahman. Each of these five selves can function properly only by opening itself fully to the corresponding level of universal Life and by constantly renewing this contact.

When this renewal process is faulty, the self is cut off from universal Life and remains undeveloped. This is what happens when we lead an ignorant, unconscious life. To achieve the full development of each *kośa*-self, and the integral growth of the whole personality, each *kośa* must open fully to universal Life. For this it is necessary to enter into each *kośa*, understand its working, remove its defects, purify it, develop its powers and open it fully to universal life. Is it possible to do all this?

Entering the *kośa* and opening it up are not physical acts. It is by extending awareness that we contact the *kośas*. But for this we must first discover the centre of our awareness, that is, the point at which the Atman manifests itself, the point of contact between the Jivātman and the Paramātman. What is this centre? It is the *dhī* or higher *buddhi*, also known as the spiritual heart; it is the common hall or vestibule through which we can 'enter' all the *kośas*. Once this inner door has opened, once the *dhī* or spiritual centre has awakened, the next step is to extend the higher awareness into all the *kośas*.

How to do this? Through meditation. The ancient sages developed higher forms of meditation through which they gained a deep understanding of the real nature of man and the world. With the help of these techniques we can focus the light of Atman into the nooks and corners of each *kośa*, purify them and open them to universal Life.

*Yajña is primarily a spiritual discipline*

When the ego is transcended and the

different parts of the personality are brought under the control of the Atman and opened to universal Life, our whole life becomes a joyful participation in the evolutionary creativity of the Divine. This participation in divine Life through higher awareness is called *yajña*. Through it the individual finds his place in *ṛtam*, the cosmic harmony. He understands that life is not meaningless, empty or illusory. All life is evolving towards higher levels of consciousness, freedom and bliss. *Yajña* speeds up this evolutionary process by transforming human consciousness and by enabling man to participate fully in the evolutionary progression.

It should be pointed out in this context that the aim of *yajña* is not to lead a happy, well-adjusted social life in a spirit of give and take. This kind of life can be led by tactful adjustment or slavish surrender of one's ego to the dominant person or group in the society. *Yajña* is fundamentally a spiritual discipline, and its main purpose is the transformation of human consciousness. The harmony and peace that it gives are only an effect or by-product of the higher awareness that it directly leads to. *Yajña* has thus two dimensions, a vertical one and a horizontal one. On the one hand it leads to higher and higher levels of awareness and, on the other hand, greater and greater harmony with universal Life. Even at the lower levels it is a conscious, controlled process which distinguishes it from the unconscious, impulsive drifting of ordinary life.

*Yoga, līlā and yajña*

Before proceeding further it is necessary to place *yajña* in perspective. What is its place among spiritual paths, and what distinguishes it from other disciplines?

Man's search for the Ultimate has followed two courses; through negation and through affirmation. In the way of negation, known in Vedānta as *neti, neti* ('not

this, not this'),<sup>2</sup> the world is regarded as unreal and hence evil, and the main spiritual effort is to withdraw oneself from it. Buddhism, Jainism and traditional Advaita Vedanta advocate this course.

In the way of affirmation, known in Vedanta as *iti, iti* ('this, this'),<sup>3</sup> the world is looked upon as real and as an aid in the spiritual quest. The main endeavour is to encounter Reality *through* the world. This encounter may take three forms : encounter between Puruṣa and Prakṛti; between Jīva and personal Deity : between Jīvātman and impersonal Supreme Spirit. The first type takes the form of an attempt to free the self from the hold of Prakṛti by understanding and conquering Prakṛti. This is what Patañjali's Yoga teaches. In the second type of encounter the world is looked upon as the playground of the personal Deity and life as His eternal play, *līlā*. Evil and sorrow are only an aspect of this divine sport. This view is found in the Purāṇas and was fully worked out by some of the later Vaiṣṇava schools. In the third type of encounter the world and every object in it are regarded as manifestations of the dynamism and glory of the all-pervading impersonal Spirit. Life is a divine *yajña*, a constant exchange between the individual and the cosmos. Evil and suffering are lower and imperfect manifestations of divine power caused by not participating fully in divine *yajña*. This view was originally developed in the ancient Vedas and was revived with suitable modifications by the Gīta, the Tantras and, in modern times, by Sri Ramakrishna. Whereas the Gīta united the two concepts of Yoga and *yajña*, Sri Ramakrishna combined together all the three concepts of Yoga, *līlā* and *yajña*. Furthermore, through his doctrine of *jñāna-vijñāna*

he united the way of negation and the way of affirmation by treating them as two phases of man's total experience of Reality.

The most fundamental idea of *yajña*, which distinguishes it from other disciplines, is this : the attainment of supreme harmony through participation in God's work in the world. The Vedic sages called the supreme harmony *ṛtam* : Sri Ramakrishna called it *bhāva-mukha*. It is the meeting point between God and the world, between the noumenon and the phenomenon, between the Absolute and the relative, or *nitya* and *līlā* as Sri Ramakrishna called them. This integral experience is the most mature and perfect knowledge of total Reality. Through it one reconciles all conflicts like those between good and evil, happiness and sorrow, self-effort and divine grace etc. Through it one understands how the one Reality appears as both impersonal and personal, formless and with form, immanent and transcendent.

This integral experience is attained not by running away from the world but by participating in it with right understanding ; not through meditation alone but by combining work and meditation ; not through knowledge alone but also by loving all as manifestations of the Divine ; not by seeking only one's own salvation but by seeking the liberation of all (*sarvamukti*). This is what the ideal of *yajña* stands for. It is living in the Divine, by the divine, for the Divine, and becoming an open channel for the Divine.

#### *Yajña — a spiritual balance-sheet*

Human life is a channel for the flow of divine power. What *yajña* does is to keep this channel open by purifying it and clearing the obstacles. At first God appears to be at the receiving end of this channel, as the enjoyer (*bhoktā*) of our sacrifice, as the goal of our striving. But as we advance we realize that God is also the starting point ;

2. Short for *na idam brahma iti*, 'that this is not Brahman'.

3. Short for *idam brahma iti*, 'that this is Brahman'.

He is the eternal giver, infact, the only giver, all others being only distributors. As the Gita says, God is the 'Prime Mover from whom all work originated at the beginning of Time.'<sup>4</sup> Everything comes from God and returns to God—through us.

When we realize this, the difference between the sacred and the secular will disappear. We will then see every activity either as an act of receiving from God or as an act of giving to God. Every man's life is nothing but a balance-sheet for God. Look into your life, examine it carefully, and see how much you have received from God and how much you have returned to Him.

In ordinary secular life we are very careful in keeping accounts of income and expenditure, or debit and credit as accountants call them. But we seldom extend this habit to our daily conduct and experiences. Listening is income, talking is expenditure. Learning is income, teaching is expenditure. To be loved is income, to love is expenditure. To be hated is income, to hate is expenditure. Health is income, disease is expenditure. Purity is income, sin is expenditure. All kinds of income are not necessarily beneficial, nor are all kinds of expenditure harmful. If we keep such an account of our day-to-day life with the understanding that everything comes from universal Life and returns to it, ordinary living will become a *yajña* and secular life will change into spiritual life.

A spiritual aspirant is God's accountant. Knowing very well that everything belongs to God, he keeps a close watch on what he receives from universal Life, how and how much he uses it. He uses only just enough of it to meet his physical and spiritual needs. This form of true self-denial is

what is meant by *tapas*. Everything else he returns to universal Life. Allowing the gifts of universal Life to flow freely through him to others, unobstructed by the ego, is what is meant by *dāna*. True *tapas* is not mere austerity which often degenerates into self-torture: true *dāna* is not egoistic charity. For a Karma Yogi *tapas* and *dāna* are two methods by which he orientates himself to universal Life. As such, they are not special disciplines to be done at a specific time (as for example, fasting or giving in charity on a particular day) but constitute a two-fold general principle that converts every activity into a *yajña*, a spiritual discipline. If *Yajña* is the main body, *tapas* and *dāna* are its wings. These three together form the very foundation of spiritual life, especially of Karma Yoga. That is why Śrī Kṛṣṇa has emphatically declared 'The practice of *yajña*, *dāna*, and *tapas* should never be given up . . This is my firm and highest belief.'<sup>5</sup> The Upaniṣad also states: 'The wise aspire to realize It (the infinite Self) through the study of the Vedas, through *yajña*, *dāna* and *tapas*.'<sup>6</sup>

If the Karma Yogi converts his whole life into a *yajña* through *tapas* and *dāna*, the Bhakta, the lover of God, does it through prayer and worship. Prayer is asking God, receiving from God. Everything we receive is the result of a prayer, though we may not always be aware of it. Even those who do not pray to God are full of desires, wishes and hopes—and desires, wishes and hopes are only unarticulated, unconscious prayers. In this sense every one is constantly praying. What a spiritual aspirant does is to

<sup>4</sup> Cf तमेव चाद्य पुरुष प्रपद्ये

यतः प्रवृत्तिः प्रसृता पुराणी ।

*Bhagavad-Gītā* 15.4.

<sup>5</sup> यज्ञदानतपःकर्म न त्याज्य कार्यमेव तत्

... .. निश्चित मतमुत्तमम् ॥

*Bhagavad-Gītā* 18.5-6.

<sup>6</sup> तमेत वेदानुवचनेन ब्राह्मणा विविदिषन्ति

यज्ञेन दानेन तपसानाशकेन ।

*Bṛhadāraṇyaka-upaniṣad* 4.4.22, and also 6.2.16.

be conscious of this fact, articulate his wishes properly and direct them all to God. Furthermore, he accepts everything with gratitude as God's *prasāda*, grace. Worship is giving or surrendering to God as an act of service. A true Bhakta converts all his activities into different forms of worship, at first with the help of repeated interior self-offering and, later on, through a habitual meditative awareness of the presence of the Lord in his heart. Furthermore, seeing the Lord in all people, he serves them in every possible way. Service to God is called *bhujana* (from the root *bhuj* = to serve); service to man is called *sevana* or *sevā*. For centuries these two had remained separate and often even mutually contradictory. Swami Vivekananda unified them into a single path capable of leading man to spiritual fulfilment through social service. Thus, through the two disciplines of prayer and worship, a devotee of God converts his whole life into a *yajña*.

*All life is yajña*

The Yogi says: All life is *yoga*. The Bhakta says: All life is *līlā*. The Karma Yogi says: All life is *yajña*. These three—*yoga*, *līlā*, and *yajña*—are only different frames of reference to understand the relationship among God, soul and the universe. It does not matter which conceptual frame we choose. What is important is to live a real life.

Real life is divine life. Divine life is a life of harmony, higher consciousness and self-fulfilling joy. God is the source of consciousness and bliss, and all individual souls are moving along an evolutionary spiral towards this divine Centre. The closer we move towards the Centre, the more divine our life becomes. We cannot reach the divine Centre in one sudden leap. For universal life is one total organism undergoing a graded evolution and we cannot

jump out of its evolutionary spiral. All the changes that take place within and without us are brought about by Nature through its evolution. But at its lower levels evolution is a very slow process. Those who spend their lives in sense-enjoyment remain at a lower level and undergo very little transformation. However, at higher levels of consciousness individual evolutionary progression can be considerably speeded up. This is what *yajña* does.

Evolution is based on the Law of Sacrifice. At the lower levels there is struggle for existence, and only the fittest survive while the rest are sacrificed. Similarly, at the higher levels there is struggle for consciousness; only the fittest spiritual aspirants realize the ultimate Reality and gain freedom, whereas the less fitted aspirants continue to move along the evolutionary spiral. The fittest animals are those which are best adapted to their environment, the fittest spiritual aspirants are those who are best adapted to universal Life, who have converted their whole life into *yajña*.

How do we speed up our evolutionary progression? All that we have to do is to maintain intense aspiration and to convert our entire life into a *yajña* by opening ourselves, surrendering ourselves, fully to the creative powers of universal Life. Aspiration alone is ours, all work is done by the Divine. Evolution is not an individual affair, it is a cosmic movement. All the power needed for spiritual progress comes from universal Life. When through *yajña* we open ourselves fully to it, it will bring about all the changes we need and will augment our evolutionary elan. All the logs needed to fuel spiritual evolution are there in universal Life; all that we need is an altar to build up the flames. Converting one's whole life into *yajña* means converting one's heart into an altar.

*(To be concluded)*



# THE GOSPEL OF SRI RAMAKRISHNA : AND THE LIFE OF M.

SWAMI PRABHANANDA

We learn from the diary of M.<sup>1</sup> that on 2 April 1905 the Holy Mother told Nikunja Devi, the wife of M., in the presence of Golap-Ma, 'I bless that this book (the *Kathāmṛta*) may spread very widely so that all people may know the Master.' Again on the day previous to the Kalipuja day that year the Holy Mother said to Nikunja Devi, 'Daughter-in-law, tell your husband that I am blessing him from the core of my heart.' I wonder if M. ever dreamt that the Holy Mother's blessings would bear fruit in the way they have done in recent months, which have been witnessing an unprecedented spurt in the sale of the Bengali edition of the book, with one of the new single-volume editions of the book alone registering sale of a quarter million copies in the first month and a half of its publication.

## *The chronicling of the Gospel*

Many people celebrated the *Kathāmṛta* centenary during 1982-83, and Sri Ma Trust, Chandigarh, published a commemoration volume entitled *Sri Sri Ramakrishna Kathāmṛta Centenary Memorial*, although the first volume of the *Kathāmṛta* was published first on 11 March 1902. Here it must be noted that the *Kathāmṛta* is not a reproduction of M.'s diary and that M. did not even think of the word *Kathāmṛta* as the title of his articles or book before 1898. M. met his Master Sri Ramakrishna on a Sunday in the month of February 1882. Unfortunately M. did not remember

the exact date of this meeting. It was certainly not 26 February 1882, as is popularly held. Among the three probable dates M. has mentioned in his diary, circumstantial evidences almost conclusively point to 19 February 1882 as the date of his first meeting. Evidently, M. did not record immediately the proceedings of this meeting, nor of the next six meetings, which he had with Sri Ramakrishna in quick succession. Of these, the proceedings of the first five only have been reported in the *Gospel* and the remaining two have been left out.

However, soon thereafter, perhaps six weeks following the first meeting, M. started recording the proceedings of these meetings in his diary. Being the headmaster of a school, he could be with the Master only on Sundays and other holidays. He kept short diary-notes of the incidents, discussions, and discourses that took place in the course of his association with Sri Ramakrishna. Evidently he kept these diaries for his personal use. Once M. said, 'I used to note down the Master's words in order to think about them, in the intervals before I met him again, so that the impressions made on my mind might not be overlaid by the stress of worldly work and responsibilities. It was thus for my own benefit that I first made the notes so that I might comprehend his teachings more perfectly.' When a great devotee of Sri Ramakrishna, Girish Chandra Ghosh, wanted to glance through the diary, M. declined, saying that its contents could be disclosed only after his death. But circumstances forced M. to change his decision. He devoted himself to transcribing his diary into a biographical narrative, and he did it in four stages.

1. Mahendra Nath Gupta, a great lay disciple of Sri Ramakrishna, chronicler of the Master's life, and author of the *Gospel of Sri Ramakrishna* known as the *Kathāmṛta* in its original Bengali version.

### *The publication of the Gospel*

First, he published a collection of Sri Ramakrishna's teachings under the title *Paramahamsadever Ukti*. Only its third edition, published in 1892, by Satchidananda Gītāratna has been traced. The collection was done with the help of one Sadhu Mahindranath Gupta. Recent researches clearly suggest that both Satchidananda Gītāratna and Sadhu Mahindranath Gupta were the pseudonyms of M. On seeing the first edition of this publication in Bengali, Swami Vivekananda congratulated M. on 7 February 1889, writing, 'Thanks! 1,00,000! You have hit Ramkristo in the right point. Few alas, few understand him.'

Second, repeatedly inspired by the Holy Mother Sri Sarada Devi and by some instruction he received in dream from Sri Ramakrishna, M. launched upon a daring enterprise. Instead of presenting Sri Ramakrishna's teachings in isolation, he now decided to present Sri Ramakrishna and his words in a realistic setting. Holding those diary notes in front of him, M. would meditate on them for hours to reconstruct the scenes, the dialogues, and the atmosphere he had witnessed so long ago. He was not merely recalling the past but was actually re-living those blessed hours. One of the outcomes of this exercise was the *Gospel*. Around 1897 M. published in English four booklets under the title *A Leaf from the Gospel of Sri Ramakrishna*. On reading the second leaflet Swami Vivekananda wrote him on 24 November 1897, 'Now you are doing just the thing .. You will have many blessings on you and many more curses but *vaisāhi sab kāl bantā sāheb* (That is always the way of the world, Sir.)' M. read out his manuscripts, some in English and others in Bengali, before the Sunday meetings of the Ramakrishna Mission Association held at Balaram Bose's house in Calcutta. The

Bengali monthly *Tattvamanjari* demanded that the words of the Master should be published in the vernacular. As prophesied by Swami Vivekananda, M.'s work was hailed by many as a precious gift, but there were some hostile criticisms too. Some dubbed the *Gospel* as a mere Sunday report of M. and said that the Master had other superior teachings which he did not reveal to M. Hurt by such uncharitable remarks from some familiar quarters, M. felt discouraged. However, the appreciations of persons like Swami Vivekananda and the Holy Mother dispelled all his doubts. The Holy Mother wrote him from Jayarambati, 'Once he (Sri Ramakrishna) had kept all that in safe custody with you, now, as he thinks necessary, he is getting it published. All that you have recorded is true. One day when I was listening to what you had recorded, I thought that he himself was speaking.' Thus being assured, M. hurriedly started publishing instalments of the *Kathāmṛta* in seventeen popular Bengali journals like *Udbodhan*, *Tattvamanjari*, *Nabubharat*, *Sahitya*, *Hindu Patrika*, etc. from 1897 onwards.

Third, Swami Trigunatitananda, editor of the *Udbodhan*, the Bengali organ of the Ramakrishna Order, published in one volume everything M. had already published in various journals. Thus came out on 11 March 1902, the first volume of *Sri Sri Rāmakṛṣṇa Kathāmṛta*. This brought heaps of praise for M. Still, he could not summon enough self-confidence, to proceed further. At such a moment Sri Ramakrishna guided him through a dream. On 14 October 1902, M. saw the Master in a dream. M. touched his feet. The Master assured him saying, 'I have taken your responsibility. I am holding you. Why do you worry so much?' M. begged pardon of the Master. The Master then repeatedly assured him. Henceforward M. assumed a rather aggressive posture. He

himself took the initiative, and published the second, third and fourth volumes of the *Kathāmṛta* in 1904, 1908 and 1910 respectively. The year 1925 saw the publication of its appendices in the form of a booklet. And the fifth volume was with the printers when M. passed away on 4 June 1932.

Fourth, to meet the growing demand of the readers, Vol. -I of the *Gospel*, translated into English by the author himself, was published in 1907 by the Brahmavadin Office, Madras. Again, based on the English translation of some of M.'s diary-notes, Swami Abhedananda published Vol I of the *Gospel* in December 1907 from the Vedanta Society, New York. A second edition of the first one, revised by M himself, was brought out by the Ramakrishna Math, Madras, in 1911. Next year, the Vedanta Society of San Francisco brought out a reprint of the Madras edition. Its second part was published by the Madras Math in 1922. And the full translation of the entire *Gospel* by Swami Nikhilananda appeared first in 1942.

The *Gospel* created a stir, particularly among the intellectuals. Aldous Huxley observed, 'No other saint has had so able and indefatigable a Boswell. Never have the small events of a contemplative's daily life been described with such wealth of intimate details. Never have the casual and unstudied utterances of a great religious teacher been set down with so minute a fidelity.' On reading a part of the English *Gospel* that was published at that time, Monsieur Romain Rolland wrote to M. on 10 October 1928, 'Thank you for having transmitted to us the benefit of the benign smile of your Master.' The well-known modern novelist Christopher Isherwood, who wrote a popular biography of Sri Ramakrishna, finds in the atmosphere of the *Gospel* narrative the quality of 'nowness'. Being in the occasional company of Sri

Ramakrishna M. was aware of this and tried to narrate it with a 'thankful wonder'. The style of the *Gospel* is Biblical in its simplicity. It is as simple as Sri Ramakrishna himself. It takes the readers straight to the truth, and not through any metaphysical maze.

### *The nature of the Gospel*

Though the *Gospel* is mainly a record of the teachings of Sri Ramakrishna, it is also a biography of the great Master in the last and most important phase of his life. According to Harold Nicholson a true biography must have the three elements of truth, individuality and art.<sup>2</sup> The *Gospel* has all these and something more. But what is the real 'gospel' (or glad tidings, as the word literally means) that the *Kathamṛta* has brought to humanity? It is the message of the One Eternal Religion discovered and vitalized by Sri Ramakrishna. This special feature was pointed out by Swami Vivekananda when he said, 'Other teachers taught special religions which bear their names. He left every religion undisturbed, because he had realized that, in reality, they are all part and parcel of One Eternal Religion!' Into whatever category we may put it, this piece of hagiographic literature has a great charm, for it can certainly help men to find peace and happiness even in the midst of the anti-religious philosophies of today.

The act of writing about a real person, whether in a biography or in a memoir, instantly deprives his personality of several dimensions, instantly transform him through print into a limited image. M. minimized this shortcoming by combining annotative and analytical methods with the synthetic method. When questioned about his

2. Harold Nicholson: *The Development of English Biography*, 1959, p 157.

portrayal of his Master M. explained, 'We have tried to take different photographs of the Master. Every shot provides details of Sri Ramakrishna in a different setting'. More significant than this is the fact that M.'s creative genius enabled him to project Sri Ramakrishna's detached photographs with such continuity and speed that the effect produced combines motion and life. We find in front of us, as it were, a living Sri Ramakrishna smiling, talking, cracking jokes, singing, dancing, and occasionally diving into the ocean of bliss--always with a bewitching smile on his lips. The whole book is filled through and through with the loftiness, tranquility and gravity of the highest spiritual experiences, but this is harmoniously blended with the naturalness and spontaneity of real life including the apparently trivial incidents of day-to-day life. Some even suspected that M. had foisted his own ideas on the illiterate priest of Dakshineswar. One such person was N. Bangarayya of Madras. He came to Calcutta, talked with M. for three days, and was convinced that the disciple's style of speaking was entirely different from that of the Master.<sup>3</sup> Sri Ramakrishna was unique, and unique were his words. N. N. Gupta, an eyewitness, truly remarked, 'No other man within the memory of man spoke as Ramakrishna spoke.' And M. had the unique credit of presenting those words undistorted.

Unlike other scriptures, the *Gospel* does not demand any preparation on the part of the reader. The teachings are of universal application. They satisfy the learned and the ignorant alike. A man of devotion, a man of work, a man of knowledge—all are inspired equally, not excluding the atheist. Realizing the frailties and inadequacies of human beings, Sri Ramakrishna assured everyone of the 'glad

tidings', and M. has brought that message of hope within the reach of all.

#### *Master's mahāvākya on M.*

We now turn to another important aspect of the *Gospel*. Notwithstanding his great literary talent, the production of the *Kathāmṛta* was but a by-product of M.'s Ramakrishna-sādhana, to which he had committed himself ever since his meeting Sri Ramakrishna in February 1882. Academically the most brilliant among the Master's disciples, M. was then serving as the headmaster of a high school. By that time he had had four children, three sons and a daughter. Bitter family squabbles made the peace-loving M. so despondent, that he actually walked out one night into the wide world with the thought of putting an end to his life. Circumstances brought him, however, to Sri Ramakrishna at Dakshineswar. M. considered this meeting the 'greatest event' of his life. Sri Ramakrishna welcomed him saying, 'I can see from the signs of your eyes, brows, and face that you are a yogi. You look like a yogi who has just left his seat of meditation'. Deeply moved by Sri Ramakrishna's magically plastic and sensitive disposition, attractive smile, charming voice, and deep spiritual experiences, M. opened himself freely to Sri Ramakrishna's presence and influence. His rudderless life found a new creative direction and mission. M. accepted him as his mentor and saviour in crossing the ocean of life. He would often repeat the salutation prayer:

Samsārārṇava ghore yaḥ karuṇadhāra  
svarūpakah

Namostu Rāmakṛṣṇāya tasmai śrī  
Gurave namah

(Salutations to Ramakrishna, the Guru,  
who stands firm as the helmsman while

<sup>3</sup>. *Prabuddha Bharata*, June 1949 p. 228-9.

ferrying people across the dangerous ocean of worldliness). From that moment M. had a new lease of life. Moreover, he gradually blossomed into an evangelist of the Godman.

Sri Ramakrishna, who could see the ins and the outs of M., made some significant statements about him. M regarded them as *mahāvākyas*. They were fifty-two in number. He recorded them reverentially in his diary. Among them we find Sri Ramakrishna's saying, 'I recognized you on hearing you read the Chaitanya Bhagavatam. You are my own. The same substance, like father and son... Before you came here, you didn't know who you were. Now you will know.' In the presence of Iswarchandra Vidyasagar Sri Ramakrishna told of him, 'He is a nice young man and is sound at the core. He is like the river Phalgu. The surface is covered with sand; but if you dig a little, you will find water flowing underneath.' He also said: 'Once (in a vision) I saw Gauranga and his devotees singing Kirtan in the Panchavati. I think I saw Balaram there, and you too' Referring to M. the Master once told Devendra Majumdar, 'The inundated water has united the drain with the pond. Now the water is quivering a little. He and I have become one.' The thirty-sixth *mahāvākya* states, 'Illumine him, Mother, otherwise how will he illumine others in turn? Why have you thrown him into the world? Otherwise, had this firework been ignited, how it would have excelled!' However, in another *mahāvākya* the Master assured M. by praying to the Mother, 'Mother, please reveal yourself to him now and then. Let him pursue both. What will it do by making him give up everything at once, Mother! Well, you may do whatever you like in the end. If you want him to give up everything, do so.'

From the very beginning Sri Rama-

krishna taught M., 'Do all your duties, but keep your mind on God. Live with all—with wife, land children, father and mother—and serve them. Treat them as if they were very dear to you, but you know in your heart of hearts that they do not belong to you.' While M. practised the spiritual disciplines prescribed by the Master, the latter protected him as a mother-bird protects her fledglings from rain and wind by spreading her wings over them. As M. proceeded, he became diluted in the ocean of thought of Sri Ramakrishna. Sri Ramakrishna once said to M., 'You don't want anything from me, but you love to see me and hear my words. My mind also dwells on you. I wonder how you are and why you don't come.' According to the science of homoeopathy, the strength of a medicine increases as its dilution increases. As M.'s dilution in the thought of Sri Ramakrishna increased, he became richer in his spiritual attainments.

#### *Master's ādeśas to M.*

If those fifty-two statements of Sri Ramakrishna be regarded as *śruti*, Sri Ramakrishna's specific commands to him, eighty-five in number, were held by him as *smṛti*. Here are few examples of them. 'Meditate on God, you have much work to do'. 'Visit this place, just as one cleanses a brass-pot daily'; 'Advise the youths who call upon you'; 'Bring Bankim (a boy devotee) here, otherwise you instruct him; your words will bring him illumination'; 'Whenever you fail to visit here, write me a postcard'; 'Massage my feet.'

#### *The Gospel in the life of M.*

M. not only did carefully sift and catalogue the *mahāvākyas* and *ādeśas* (commands) from the sayings of the Master, but he sincerely followed them in

letter and spirit. He served the Master in his humble way. Moreover, in spite of his natural modesty he was persuaded by the Master to sing devotional songs, and even to participate in devotional dances along with other devotees. And his endeavours were amply rewarded. Even as late as 1 March 1899 M. dreamt that he was passionately singing 'O Lord, must all my days pass by so utterly in vain?' and that on hearing this the Master passed into deep *samadhi*.

Thus went on the process of being and becoming in M. Like a sunflower with its face always turned towards the sun, M. depending entirely on Sri Ramakrishna moved forward in the path to the divine. He felt an urge to renounce family life and become a monk. Sri Ramakrishna prevented him saying, 'Mother has told me that you have to do a little of Her work—you will have to teach 'Bhagavata', the word of God to humanity. The Mother keeps a Bhagavata pundit bound to the world.' But even this could not pacify him, perhaps. Then, one evening when M. was alone with him at Dakshineswar, Sri Ramakrishna said in an ecstatic mood, 'Let nobody think that if he does not do Mother's work, it would remain undone. The Mother can turn even a straw into a teacher.' This settled once for all M.'s hesitation and doubt. In obedience to his Guru's command M. lived outwardly as a householder, but inwardly all-absorbed in the Divine. His life exemplified the Master's teaching that an ideal householder must be a *grhastha-sannyāsi*, who practises inner renunciation. He must live like a good maidservant of a rich family, loving and caring properly for the children of the house, but knowing always that her real house and children are elsewhere. Sri Ramakrishna kept a loving watch on M., who sincerely followed the Master's advice in handling the worldly problems

as well as the spiritual disciplines prescribed by him.

One day Sri Ramakrishna was heard to utter in an ecstatic mood, 'Mother, I cannot talk any further—give power to Ram, Mahendra, Bijay, and others; let them do your work from now onward.' Sri Ramakrishna chose Mahendra (M.) as his faithful recorder, commissioned him to keep a record of his teachings, tutored him in the art, and frequently discussed with him what had been spoken. Thus the Master guided him in keeping a correct and authentic record of his ideas, views and teachings. The fiftieth *mahāvākya* of Sri Ramakrishna was, 'He has no trace of ego'. True to this, this humble messenger, when someone approached him for spiritual guidance, would often say, 'I am an insignificant person. But I live by the side of an ocean and I keep with me a few pitchers of the water of the ocean. When a visitor comes, I entertain him with that. What else can I speak but his words?'

The evangelist M. gradually turned into a living gospel. His life, so long centred on the Master, became full of the thought of the Master. Like St. Paul he could say, 'The life I now live in the flesh, I live by the faith in the Son of God'. One eyewitness has recorded: 'Though his exterior was Mahendra Gupta, his interior was united with Sri Ramakrishna through his deliberating, thinking, and meditating on Sri Ramakrishna and continuously practising in life his teachings... He did not retain what is called the "fiery independent spirit of self-assertion."'. He completely gave up his inherent fiery independent thinking and desire for self-assertion. Sri Ramakrishna had filled his heart to the full. The purpose of his living was only to serve as a reflection of Sri Ramakrishna.<sup>4</sup>

4. Mahendranath Dutta: *Mastermasaver Anudhyan*, p. 19

He considered himself a mere machine driven by Sri Ramakrishna. It was from this firm faith he used to defend himself saying, 'Is it I who have produced the *Gospel*? The Master himself has done his work. Appearing in me as my intelligence and will-power, he made me write this. Even if we do not understand it, he is the doer and the supervisor who gets the work done.'<sup>5</sup> Towards the last phase of his life when some admirer of his attributed the production of the *Gospel* to his talent, M protested saying, 'The Master is everything. The tram car, as long as it is connected with the electric wire, moves forward, and has its lamps burning and fans moving. Pull out the connector, and everything will stop. Now I clearly perceive that he is leading me by holding my hand, and I am certain that he will lead me through the last part of my journey too.'<sup>6</sup>

#### *M.'s experience of the Master*

As M advanced in his journey to the temple of the Divine, one could notice another development in him. The seed of great possibilities that was sown in his heart gradually germinated and sprouted forth into a plant. As it grew into a fine tree, there appeared besides the rich foliage a beautiful bloom, rich in colour and fragrance. Quite fascinating is the story of this development. During the early days when his mental horizon had just turned crimson with the rise of the Ramakrishna-sun, he declared that he had never before seen such knowledge, ecstatic love, faith in God, renunciation, and catholicity in anybody other than Sri Ramakrishna. As his inner life deepened further, it dawned on him that Christ, Sri Chaitanya and Sri Ramakrishna—all the three were one and the same. After he had drunk a few sips

of the nectar of divine bliss in the company of Sri Ramakrishna, he one day submitted to Sri Ramakrishna, 'You are as infinite as He, of whom we have been talking. Truly, no one can fathom your depth.' His poetic temperament found nice expression when M. said to the Master, 'God sports through you. This I have realized, that you are the instrument and God is the Master. God has created other beings as if with a machine, but yourself with His own hand.' As M. progressed in his Ramakrishna-sādhana, his inner life continued to blossom forth. On 28 July 1885 M., at his Master's behest, repeated before him, 'You told us to imagine a field extending to the horizon and beyond. It extends without any obstruction, but we cannot see it on account of a wall in front of us. In that wall there is a round hole. Through the hole we see a part of that infinite field.' The Master asked him, 'Tell me what that hole is.' M. replied, 'You are that hole. Through you, can be seen everything—that Infinite meadow without any end.' The Master patted the disciple's back expressing his pleasure at the latter's understanding. The disciple's understanding continued to grow deeper. He finally set up in his heart a perennial 'Dakshineswar' where Sri Ramakrishna, the God-incarnate sported eternally with his loving devotee. He further shared with the worldly people the bliss he derived through his regular communion with the God-incarnate.

From being a chronicler M. gradually changed into an evangelist dedicated to the cause of the Master. But what for? An idealist as he was, he dreamt of a golden future. In a letter addressed to a swami of the Ramakrishna Order in 1928 M. wrote: 'This time the Godman of modern times has appeared in this country. Henceforth the foreign culture, that is, the so-called material civilization of the

5. *Udbodhan*, Vol. 67, No. 8, p. 434.

6. *Ibid.*, Vol. 65, No. 6, p. 316.

West, will not be adored for long. Sex-worship and dollar-worship, it is hoped, disappear by the grace of the Lord. "Pure devotion", "Human life's aim is God-realization", etc. as upheld by the Master, will henceforth be pursued. And your life and character, and not mere lectures, will arouse the consciousness of the people, no doubt.' Thus in his daily life M. caught the glint of his Master's splendour and glory. It shone through all he said, all he did, all he was.

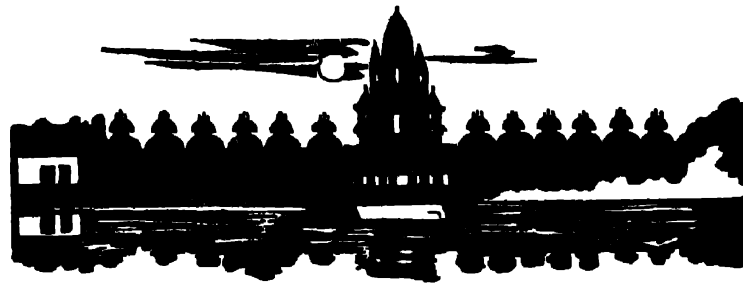
Sri Ramakrishna had noticed the co-existence of the attitudes of 'servant-I' and 'I-am-That' in M. Though these two constituted his personality, only the attitude of 'servant-I' found predominance in the life and deeds of M. as the chronicler of the Master. Bathed in the glorious light of Ramakrishna, 'Master Mahashay', as M. was popularly called, was a typical Indian *rṣi* who used to draw crowds of spiritual seekers as well as strangers around him. One such person, an Englishman, has left on record his impression about him. He wrote, 'Night after night I come, less to hear the pious utterances of Master Mahashaya than to bask in the spiritual sunshine of his presence. The atmosphere around him is tender and beautiful, gentle and loving, he has found some inner bliss and the radiation of it seems palpable. Often I forget his words, but I cannot forget his benignant personality. That which drew him again to Ramakrishna seems to draw me to Mahashaya

also, and I begin to understand how potent must have been the influence of the teacher when the pupil exercises such a fascination upon me.'<sup>7</sup>

With his own individuality lost in the light of Sri Ramakrishna, M.'s true nature shone in the glory of his Master. His true life which began as the chronicler soon became a glorious commentary on the *Gospel* itself. His thoughts, actions and utterings—all reflected Sri Ramakrishna and his glory. Spiritual aspirants felt attracted by the angelic appearance of M., with silky white beard and large lustrous eyes. They regarded him as 'his Master's voice.' In him they could also see his Master's reflection. He was a true evangelist of the first order, and his words and actions evoked nothing but the thoughts of his Master and the image of his Master. Thus brilliantly shone the Mahendra-moon, a satellite of the Ramakrishna-sun, till 4 June 1932 when he offered his last prayer, 'Mother—Gurudev take me in your arms.' His prayer was granted. The disciple's spirit got reunited with the Master. Nevertheless, M. as the chronicler and evangelist continues to live in the *Gospel* side by side with his Master—he as *anoraṇiyān* (smaller than the smallest) and his Master as *mahatomahīyān* (greater than the greatest). They have for all practical purposes become one for eternity.

7. Paul Brunton *A Search in Secret India*, 1934, p. 133.





## INSIGHT AND MANIFESTATION: A WAY OF PRAYER IN A CHRISTIAN CONTEXT—II

DR BEATRICE BRUTEAU

### *The Way of Manifestation*

If the prayer of insight was our learning to live in God, the prayer of manifestation is our experience of God living in us. In this prayer one has a vivid sense of God being one's life not in the sense of God being the most important thing in one's life, but in the sense of God being the act of living which one is. God is experienced as a dynamic activity of existing, which existing is, in me, my existing. Therefore the prayer experience, or conscious attending to God, becomes now a matter of expression, or action. What one does is God's doing.

It is common for those who experience the higher states of prayer to say that they have not done anything of themselves but God has done it in them or to them. They speak of the divine initiative and call their experience passive. But it also happens that some say that what is characteristic of their prayer is that they cannot tell whether what lives and moves in them is their own life and will or God's. In the experience and the theological explanation offered here, it is suggested that while, if one could distinguish between 'my act' and 'God's act' one would say 'It is God's act not mine,' the whole point of the experience itself is precisely that it

becomes impossible and nonsensical (having no assignable meaning) any longer to make such a distinction.

This is the interpretation I would put on the word of Swami Brahmananda that spiritual life begins with samādhi. It is only after one has realized the divine union that one can begin to live the divine life. Coinciding with the divine life and consciousness means, in a Christian context, participating in the divine activity of creating, so that the prayerful life becomes, when it is full and ripe, the active life in the world. This is not the same as the active life serving as a prayerful life, which it does as one is advancing toward the state of insight and union. There the effort of activity serves as a means of purification to the one who prays, a preliminary to the state of union. Here the activity is a consequence of the divine union and comes about not because of the nature, condition, or situation of the one who prays, but because of the nature and will of God. It is God who is active and creative, and therefore one who is united with God must perforce be active and creative with God.

Several realizations or forms of the prayer of manifestation follow from this. Among them are: All my actions are God's actions. I am united with Jesus in

his capacity as the Logos through whom all things are created. I participate in creating the world I experience. And I can create new and better worlds.

*All my actions are God's actions.* It is essential to remember that this is being said of one who has passed through all the preceding stages of prayer and whose actions are therefore pure and benevolent. Also, the emphasis here is on the existential and dynamic union with God; this is not a way of claiming that one can justify, or call attention to, one's acts by exhibiting them as divinely inspired or mandated. It is rather a humble but vivid realization that even my least movement of lifting my pen or drawing my breath is possible only by God's creative presence in that action itself, and that when I serve my neighbour, it is God dwelling in me who performs this service, no prideful credit to me.

More than this, though: I am impelled to act, and to act as well and as generously and intelligently and beautifully as my nature permits, because the divine creative pressure is expanding within me. *It* experiences creative urgency, and this urgency moves through me, through whatever limited abilities I have. And it doesn't matter how limited those abilities may be. They are full of the divine creativity; all that they are and all that they do is sustained by the divine life. And indeed, it is part of the divine creativity itself that it should express itself in limited ways, so what is one degree or kind of limitation compared to another? All are limited, and all are divinely active.

The particularity of my limited mode of expressing the divine life thus is part of that very divine activity. I can realize my union with the absolutely Transcendent One and therefore with its creative self-expression and therefore with the particular limited forms in which it is expressed, and

therefore with *this* particular limited form which I am accustomed to call 'myself'. Perhaps we can appropriately recall here St. Bernard's sequence of ways of relating love of self and love of God. In the beginning we love ourselves for our own sake, then we love God for our sake, then we love God for God's sake, and finally we are able to love ourselves for God's sake. How different is the last state from the first!

In daily life this means that everything is transformed. The most familiar things and actions are shot through with the divine presence.<sup>22</sup> Everything is marvellous, because everything is something that God is doing; nothing is ordinary or tedious or banal or trivial or unworthy of notice. Things/events are no longer compared with one another, but all are instinctively and spontaneously compared with Nothing, with Nonexistence. Nothing is taken for granted, the world is not a given from which one starts, much less a deception or a trap from which one would escape. One *lives* the world from the inside out, so to speak, like an illumination, a

<sup>22</sup>. The world is charged with the grandeur of  
God.

It will flame out, like shining from shook  
foil;

It gathers to a greatness, like the ooze  
of oil

Crushed

And for all this, nature is never spent;  
There lives the dearest freshness deep  
down things;

And though the last lights off the black  
West went

Oh, morning, at the brown brink eastward,  
springs—

Because the Holy Ghost over the bent  
World broods with warm breast and with  
ah! bright wings.

'God's Grandeur,' by Gerard Manley Hopkins, available in many collections, e.g., *Poems and Prose of Gerard Manley Hopkins* (London, Penguin, 1953), p. 27.

radiation. It is, perhaps, something like the way one listens to music very intently, so caught up in it that one feels that one is *making* the music, that this music is one's own song, one's own self-expression.

It further means that action in the world need not be avoided but one can be quite active if that is the appropriate disposition of the abilities that make up the nature of the particular being that one is. One participates in the divine creative life by developing and operating those abilities in the context of the rest of the divine creativity, the world. Such action cannot be distracting as it would have been at an earlier stage, because one now perceives it precisely as the divine life, as the creative presence of God, God here in action, God acting through me and through others. The whole attention and devotion are wrapped up in God and nothing but God because one doesn't see anything else except God - God as creatively active in the many things/events.

*I am united with Jesus in his capacity as the Logos through whom all things are created.* Ruth Burrows, in her *Guidelines for Mystical Prayer*, says that the state of transforming union has 'no counterpart in nature. It can be understood only in the incarnation. It derives from that and, as someone dared to suggest, can be called an extension of it. A person in this state is totally possessed by Jesus, identified with him in his surrender to his Father. Thus, through her (the one who prays) Jesus is on earth in an incomparable way. His kingdom has come in her and because of this comes ever more fully into the world.'<sup>23</sup>

The person in whom the transforming union has been realized may be regarded as an extension of the incarnation of the Logos in Jesus. This is the experience of

the one who prays in this way. Jesus experiences himself as, identifies himself with, the 'Word' or 'Son of God' level of being, the unique Principle through which the Absolute manifests itself in the world

He is the image of the invisible God, the firstborn of all creation; for in him all things were created, in heaven and on earth, visible and invisible all things were created through him and for him. He is before all things, and in him all things hold together.<sup>24</sup>

He was in the beginning with God, all things were made through him and without him was not anything made that was made.<sup>25</sup>

And the Word became flesh and dwelt among us, full of grace and truth, we have beheld his glory, glory as of the only Son from the Father.<sup>26</sup>

The suggestion I want to make here is that this incarnation is not only a utilitarian affair, something done in order to accomplish a given end, but it is a spontaneous, self-expressive act on the part of God, an act of beauty, an end in itself. It is epiphany, manifestation. And not even manifestation *to* someone, in order to convince, persuade, show, or console. It is, if we may say so, 'intransitive' self-manifestation, the act of an artist.

Now, the one whose prayer takes the form of realization of union with Jesus, finds that this means union with the Principle of divine self-manifestation, and participation in the incarnation. This one *also* is the Word made flesh, dwelling here. The experience of union, or coincidence, makes one experience this from 'the inside' and in this sense know it of oneself, but one also recognizes that it is true of all else that exists. The scope of 'the incarnation' expands to include 'all creation'. The sense of being an extension of the incarnation then operates in concrete life

<sup>24</sup>. Colossians 1.15-17

<sup>25</sup>. John 1.2-3.

<sup>26</sup>. John 1.14

<sup>23</sup>. London Sheed and Ward, 1976. p 118.

in two ways. In the narrower sense, the one who prays in Jesus feels a personal union with him and a participation in his particular career in the world. One's own manifestation takes the form of extending this career as one conceives it and according to one's abilities. In the broader sense, one realizes union with the Logos which becomes incarnate in Jesus, and works/plays to manifest this universal principle.

*I participate in creating the world I experience* In some sense it must be true that 'all things are created (through (me) and for (me)).' The one who prays realizes in a practical way that the world-manifestation in which one lives is partially a product of one's own creative activity. What I experience what is 'for me'—has to some extent come 'through me'

The gospels speak a good deal of 'faith', or 'believing'. This can be taken in various ways. I want to suggest here that one meaning may be that 'faith' is our conscious participation in creating the world we experience

And as Jesus passed on from there, two blind men followed him, crying aloud, "Have mercy on us, Son of David." When he entered the house, the blind men came to him, and Jesus said to them, "Do you believe that I am able to do this?" They said to him, "Yes, Lord." Then he touched their eyes, saying, "According to your faith be it done to you." And their eyes were opened.<sup>27</sup>

But what is it to 'believe'? It is, in this meaning among others, to be convinced of the reality (or possibility) of a certain world-state and to expect to experience it. We are always doing this, more or less, at least with respect to our conviction about the possibility and the probability of certain events. Our own experience—what we notice, what stands

out for us—is to a large extent shaped by what we already believe about the world.

But, now, if we experience being united with the Logos which creates the world—which says 'Let it be' and it is so—we see that our 'belief', which picks out certain aspects of world-experience to be focused in our reflexive consciousness, is somehow caught up in, or is part of, the universal Logos' act of creating the world. The world is not just imposed upon me, but I have some input into it, however tiny. And my 'believing' that 'makes it so' is not a fancy or a deception or an irregularity, but is a part of the way the universe is designed to operate.

Consequently, I feel that I belong to the Logos and I belong to the universe that it creates, and my existence and my action and my believing are all 'integral parts, or aspects, or participations in, the divine self-manifestation that is the world. The rest of the world is not disconnected from me and over against me; it appears almost as an extension of myself. I need not avoid and cannot escape responsibility for my experience, but neither do I find my experience alienating. This gives a deeper meaning to the notion of 'self-acceptance' and world or experience acceptance that has long been mentioned in spiritual traditions and that is now popular in psychological circles. However, we must reiterate that it is not the unrealized self that makes the significant act of acceptance of self, world, and experience, but the realized self. Its acceptance is rooted in the experience of union with the Logos in whom 'all things were created'.

This leads inevitably to a sense of profound involvement with, and commitment to, other people and the rest of the world generally. One feels that all others are 'bone of my bones and flesh of my flesh.'<sup>28</sup> One quite literally means it when

<sup>27</sup>. Matthew 9:27-29,

<sup>28</sup>. Genesis 2:23,

one declares 'Whatever you do to the least of these...you do to me,'<sup>29</sup> and feels that all creation is a single living being, which is one's own being at the same time that it is the being of everyone else too. This is the state of the bodhisattva, in which one longs for the salvation of all and dedicates oneself to the welfare, perfection, and happiness of all beings.

*I can create new and better worlds.* These last two realizations, of the creative power of faith and of solidarity with all creation, produce, finally, the prayer of manifestation that unites with the creative Logos in making 'all things new.'<sup>30</sup> The one who prays is clearly aware that creation is still going on and that the exercise of 'faith' is our way of participating in it.

And Jesus answered them "Truly, I say to you, if you have faith and never doubt, even if you say to this mountain, 'Be taken up and cast into the sea,' it will be done. And whatever you ask in prayer, you will receive, if you have faith<sup>31</sup>

"Truly, truly, I say to you, if you ask anything of the Father, he will give it to you in my name. Hitherto you have asked nothing in my name; ask, and you will receive, that your joy may be full."<sup>32</sup>

What has to be noticed here is that the 'asking' must be done 'in prayer' and 'in my name.' This protects us against any interpretation that would allow idiosyncratic or magical practice of 'faith'. One must be 'in prayer,' that is, one must have passed through the stages of purification and transcendence of all self-centred or self-seeking movements to the transforming divine union in which the individual will is entrained with the divine will. And one must ask 'in my name,'

that is, one must be identifying with, and locating oneself in, the Logos, or Son of God, level of reality; one must actually *be* 'in' the Name, the essential reality of the person.

All of this being so, one can then consider what the exercise of faith might mean as a prayer of manifestation. Perhaps we may think of faith as a distinct faculty of consciousness, in addition to the knowing power, the willing power, and the valuing or affective power. If we describe carefully what we mean, we may say that the faith faculty is allied to the imagination. Imagination is the power of consciousness to form internally a novel being by improvisation, to fabricate something on the interface between the conceptual level of the spirit and the material level of the cosmos. Imagination constructs the model in consciousness and then projects it outward and clothes it spatially, temporally, and materially. The imagination is the artistic faculty, it is the power by which great works of art are composed and created.

But it need not be limited to such works as painting, music, and literature. Daily life is a creation, a work of art, and improvement of our life and world is a work of faith. Healing in the name of God is a creative act that has long been practised, and why should it not be expanded to all sorts of 'healing,' of larger scale ills as well as diseases of the individual? And why not pass beyond correcting what we experience as ill to adding to what we experience as good and beautiful, that our 'joy may be full'? Up to this time, says Jesus, we have not really asked in the name of the Logos. If we can enter into this prayer of manifestation, shall we not ask?

We have usually thought of faith as something that we have at the *beginning* of our religious pilgrimage. Sustaining

29. Matthew 25:40

30. Revelation 21:5.

31. Matthew 21:21-22.

32. John 16:23-24.

ourselves by reliance on the word of those who *have* seen, we do our spiritual practices and eventually, by the grace of God, we break through to vision of the Reality, after which we need faith no longer.<sup>33</sup> This is a perfectly good use of the word, and when that meaning is intended, that statement about what happens is true. But 'faith' can have more than one meaning. When we take 'faith' to mean conviction and expectation coupled with a clear, unwavering locus of the imagination in union with the divine will,<sup>34</sup> then we may see how it is a late phenomenon in the spiritual journey, something that comes in a full and operative way only when the realization of union with the creative Logos is steady.

In this latter sense, we have not had much faith, and we have not done 'the wonderful works of God'.<sup>35</sup> We are like the disciples of Jesus who tried to cast out a demon but failed, provoking Jesus to exclaim, 'O faithless and perverse generation, how long am I to be with you? How long am I to bear with you?' Later, 'the disciples came to Jesus privately and said, "Why could we not cast it out?" He said to them, "Because of your little faith. For truly, I say to you, if you have

faith, nothing will be impossible to you."<sup>36</sup> But even Jesus could not perform miracles where the people themselves were lacking in faith.<sup>37</sup> So it may be that the awakening of the faculty of faith is something that comes fairly late in the spiritual life and results from the realization of one's union with the divine creative power.

### *Prayer in Jesus*

This has been a description, together with some argument and speculation, of a way of prayer in and through Jesus. The point has been to say that the one who prays first gains insight by entering into the consciousness and the personal reality of Jesus, discovering there that one is united with the 'Son of God' or Logos Principle of Reality. Then, because one is so united, one participates in doing what the Logos does, that is, manifesting God by creating the world. Thus one's actions become prayers also, prayers of externalization and manifestation as the internalizations had been prayers of insight.

Both types of prayer, it seems to me, are characteristic of a Christian context, of prayer that is somehow referred to Jesus. And indeed, I would suggest, both types of prayer are essential to us human beings in the context of any spiritual tradition. For prayer, as I said in the beginning, is a matter of coming to know, and to coincide with, The Reality, following on which it is also a matter of playing one's full role in The Reality. The complete spiritual life is both insight, or realization of the transcendent root of our being, and manifestation of the creative expression of that being

(Concluded)

33. 'We walk by faith, not by sight.' II Corinthians 5:7 Cf the story of Jesus' revelation to the samaritan woman he met at the well. 'Many Samaritans from that city believed in him because of the woman's testimony. He stayed there two days. And many more believed because of his word. They said to the woman, "It is no longer because of your words that we believe, for we have heard for ourselves and we know..."' John 4.39-42

34. 'Faith is the assurance of things hoped for, the conviction of things not seen.' Hebrews 11.1. 'Let him ask in faith, with no doubting, for he who doubts is like a wave of the sea that is driven and tossed by the wind. For that person must not suppose that a double-minded man, unstable in all his ways, will receive anything from the Lord' James 1.6-8

35. Acts 2:11

36. Matthew 17.17-21, cf. Mark 4.40: 'He said to them, "Why are you afraid? Have you no faith?"'

37. Matthew 13.58. 'He did not do many mighty works there (in Nazareth) because of their unbelief'

## GIRISH CHANDRA GHOSH

SWAMI CHETANANANDA

*(Continued from previous issue)*

There is a saying that if a man takes one step toward God, God takes ten steps toward him. It was not just that Girish was seeking Sri Ramakrishna; even more so, it was Sri Ramakrishna who was seeking Girish to play a vital role in his divine drama.

Long before he met Girish, Sri Ramakrishna had had a vision which he described as follows: 'One day, when I was meditating in the Kali Temple, I saw a naked boy skipping into the temple. He had a tuft of hair on the crown of his head, and was carrying a flask of wine under his left arm and a vessel of nectar in his right hand. "Who are you?" I asked. "I am Bhairava (the chief of Śiva's host)," he replied. On my asking the reason for his coming, he answered, "To do your work." Years later, when Girish came to me, I recognized that Bhairava in him.'

Girish hated hypocrisy from the bottom of his heart. Being bold and strong in character, he did not find it necessary to hide his weaknesses. And indeed, it takes tremendous courage to unite mind and speech, especially to one's discredit. Girish would say, 'I have drunk so many bottles of wine that if you were to place one bottle on top of another they would reach the height of Mount Everest.' It is true that he drank a great deal and he had once been addicted to opium. He also would visit brothels often. But one should not think that he was a seducer, an exploiter, a cheat or given to actual

cruelty. His strength of character kept him above hypocrisy and other such evils.

When Girish was drunk he had little control over his speech and behaviour. Seeing him in this condition, even the girls of the brothels hesitated to open their doors to him. 'One night,' said Girish,

In a euphoric and drunken mood, I was visiting a house of prostitution with two of my friends. But suddenly I felt an urge to visit Sri Ramakrishna. My friends and I hired a carriage and drove out to Dakshineswar. It was late at night, and everyone was asleep. The three of us entered Sri Ramakrishna's room, tipsy and reeling. Sri Ramakrishna grasped both my hands and began to sing and dance in ecstasy. The thought flashed through my mind, 'Here is a man whose love embraces all—even a wicked man like me whose own family would condemn me in this state. Surely this holy man, respected by the righteous, is also the saviour of the fallen.'

One day a devotee complained to Sri Ramakrishna about Girish's habit of drinking and begged him to ask Girish to give it up. But Sri Ramakrishna sternly replied: 'Why do you trouble your head about him? He who has taken charge of him will look after him. Girish is a devotee of the heroic type. I tell you, drinking will not affect him.'

On another occasion Sri Ramakrishna asked Aswini Kumar Dutta if he knew Girish Ghosh.

'Which Girish Ghosh? The one connected with the theatre?'

'Yes.'

'I have never seen him, but I know him by reputation.'

'A good man.'

'They say he drinks.'

'Let him! Let him! How long will he continue that?'

Sri Ramakrishna never forbade Girish to drink, as he knew that it takes time to change deep-rooted habits. Yet the silent influence of the Master's love worked miracles.

Girish saw his life changing under the influence of Sri Ramakrishna, yet he could not fathom the nature of this great soul. One day he asked the Master, 'Who are you, sir?' Sri Ramakrishna replied, 'Some say I am Ramprasad (a poet-saint of Bengal), others that I am Raja Ramakrishna. I simply live here.'

Gradually Girish became convinced that Sri Ramakrishna was an Incarnation of God, and he started to spread this idea among the devotees. On a certain occasion Sri Ramakrishna asked Girish, 'Hello! What were you saying about me? I eat, drink, and make merry.'

Girish, 'What should we have been saying about you? Are you a holy man?'

Ramakrishna, 'No, nothing of the sort. Truly I do not feel that I am a holy man.'

Girish, 'I am not your equal even in joking.'

In the same vein, Girish related once that Sri Ramakrishna had asked the future Swami Yogananda what he thought of him. The young man replied, 'You are neither a householder nor a sannyasin (monk).' Sri Ramakrishna was greatly pleased and exclaimed, 'What an extraordinary statement you have just made!' Sri Ramakrishna was happy to know that his disciple had recognized his divine nature, which is beyond all limitations and stages of life.

One day Girish surrendered himself completely to the Master. He asked him

for instruction as to what he should do from then on. 'Do just what you are doing now,' said Sri Ramakrishna. 'Hold on to God with one hand and to the world with the other. Think of God at least in the morning and evening.' This sounded simple to Girish, but then he recalled that his life was so irregular that it would be hard for him to remember God at those stated hours; so he kept quiet. Sri Ramakrishna read his mind and said, 'Well, if you cannot do that, then remember God before you eat and before you sleep.' But now Girish was reluctant to promise anything to Sri Ramakrishna. He knew that, with his instinctive resistance to self-discipline and rules, he might not be able to keep even this simple observance. Then Sri Ramakrishna went into an ecstatic mood and said to him, 'So you are unwilling to agree even to this. All right. Give me your *power of attorney*. Henceforth I will take full responsibility for you. You won't have to do anything at all.'

Girish was relieved. This sounded to his liking, for he understood that Sri Ramakrishna had relieved him of all responsibility for his own spiritual well-being and had made him free. But, in fact, he had made himself Sri Ramakrishna's slave. Complete self-surrender is more binding than the observance of strict disciplines. One day, soon after this, Girish remarked in Sri Ramakrishna's presence, 'I shall do this.' 'No, no,' corrected Sri Ramakrishna. 'You can't talk like that anymore. Say, "I shall do this if God wills."' Girish began to understand. As time passed he came to realize that he could not perform any action of his own free will. He had to consciously surrender to the Divine Will, and gradually he found that he was forced to think of the Master every moment. In the later part of his life he would say, 'Look at me. I am not even free to breathe.'



To a large extent progress in spiritual life depends on the intensity of one's effort. Yet it still takes time to eradicate past *samskāras* (impressions of the mind). In Girish's case, however, his faith and love were so intense that a transformation in his life was brought about very quickly. In spite of this, Sri Ramakrishna once made a remark about Girish to another devotee, 'You may wash a thousand times a cup that has held a solution of garlic, but is it ever possible to get rid of the smell altogether?' Girish heard about it and he was hurt. He went to Sri Ramakrishna and asked, 'Will this smell of garlic go?'

'Yes, it will.'

'So you say it will.'

'All smell disappears when a blazing fire is lighted. If you heat a cup smelling of garlic, you get rid of the smell, it becomes a new cup.'

Now and then Sri Ramakrishna would visit Girish's theatre and bring him sweets. Once the Master led Girish with his own hands. Girish wrote of this in his memoirs.

One day when I arrived at Dakshineswar, Sri Ramakrishna was just finishing his noonday meal. He offered me his dessert, but as I was about to eat it he said, 'Wait, Let me feed you myself.' Then he put the pudding into my mouth with his own fingers, and I ate as hungrily and unself-consciously as a small baby. I forgot that I was an adult. I felt I was a child of the mother, and the mother was feeding me. But now, when I remember how these lips of mine had touched many impure lips and how Sri Ramakrishna fed me, touching them with his holy hand, I am overwhelmed with emotion and say to myself 'Did this actually happen?' Or was it only a dream?

One day Sri Ramakrishna asked Girish to massage his feet, allowing him the opportunity to give him loving, personal service as an intimate disciple. Girish wrote later, 'I was unwilling. I thought,

"What nonsense! Who is going to sit and massage his feet?" But now when the memory returns I become overwhelmed with remorse. It is only the thought of his infinite love that gives me solace.'

Gradually, however, Girish began to notice how other devotees were serving the Master with love and respect, and by contrast, what a terrible life he was leading. He felt bad, but because of his dissolute life style he was reluctant to offer his service. Then one day, when Sri Ramakrishna was visiting the theatre, Girish, under the influence of liquor, voiced his desire: 'I have not been able to serve you in this life. But if you are born again as my son I can do so. Please promise me that you will be my son.' 'What are you saying?' said Sri Ramakrishna. 'Why should I be born as your son? I shall be your guru, your Chosen Ideal.' Then Girish became angry and abused the Master in coarse language. The devotees who were present were very much shocked and upset and asked the Master not to see Girish again. Sri Ramakrishna quietly returned to Dakshineswar. He prayed, 'O Mother, Girish is an actor. How can he understand your glory? Mother, please forgive him.'

The next day Ram Chandra Dutta visited Dakshineswar. He heard the story of Girish's behaviour the previous evening and told the Master: 'Sir, the serpent Kaliya<sup>1</sup> told Kṛṣṇa, "Lord, you have given me only poison; where shall I get nectar to offer you?" It is the same with Girish. Where will he get nectar? Girish has worshipped you with whatever you have given him.' Sri Ramakrishna smiled and said to the other devotees present:

1. Reference to the story of Kṛṣṇa subduing the venomous snake Kāliya by dancing on the serpent's head. Kāliya began spewing out quantities of poison and told Kṛṣṇa, 'Lord, it is you who have given me poison, rather than nectar, with which to worship you.'

'Listen to what he is saying. Get a carriage. I shall go to Girish's house right now.'

Meanwhile, Girish was very repentant. He had refused to eat and was weeping piteously. Suddenly he saw the Master at his house and was overwhelmed. He said, 'Master, if you had not come today, I would have concluded that you had not attained that supreme state of knowledge where praise and blame are equal, and that you could not be called a paramahansa (an illumined soul).'

Sri Ramakrishna once said to Girish: 'You utter many abusive and vulgar words, but that doesn't matter. It is better for these things to come out. There are some people who fall ill on account of blood poisoning, the more the poisoned blood finds an outlet, the better it is for them. You will be purer day by day. You will improve very much day by day. People will marvel at you.'

One morning Girish went to Balaram Bose's house and found Balaram cleaning rice. Balaram was a rich landlord and had many servants, but nevertheless he was doing this menial work himself. Girish was amazed and asked Balaram the reason for this. Balaram replied: 'The Master is coming today, and he will have his lunch here. So I am cleaning the rice myself.'

Girish was impressed by Balaram's devotion, but again it saddened him that he could not also serve the Master in that way. He returned home and, closing the door, thought: 'Indeed, God comes to the homes of those who have devotion like Balaram. I am a wretched drunkard. There is no one here who can receive the Master properly and feed him.' Girish lay down on his bed. At 1:30 P. M. he heard a knock at his door. Opening it, he found the Master standing there. 'Girish, I am hungry,' said the Master.

'Could you give me some food?' And yet Sri Ramakrishna had finished his meal at Balaram's house only a little while earlier! As there was no food in his house, Girish asked the Master to wait. He then hurried to a restaurant where he purchased some fried bread and potato curry and brought it back to the Master. This food was coarse and hard to digest—not at all the kind of food usually served to the Master. But Sri Ramakrishna ate it with great joy.

Swami Brahmananda once commented that among all of the disciples of Sri Ramakrishna, Swami Vivekananda and Girish Ghosh had the greatest intellectual powers. Yet Girish's intellect could not stand up to the power with which the Master conveyed the incomprehensible nature of Brahman. One day the Master told him: 'What do you know about the knowledge of Brahman? The great sage Nārada saw the infinite ocean of Satchidananda from a distance and returned; the ever-pure Śukadeva touched that Ocean only three times; and the great god Śiva drank only three handfuls of its water and lost consciousness.' Girish clapped his hand on his forehead and exclaimed, 'Stop, sir! Say no more. My head is reeling.'

Girish one day requested Sri Ramakrishna to give him a spiritual vision. 'Do not desire such visions,' was the reply. 'For even if you have them, you may not believe what you see.' Later Girish understood the import of those words, for he realized that his doubting mind would have considered such an experience to be some kind of magic or illusion.

Once Girish heard the Master say: 'If a passionate desire arises and persists during meditation, stop and begin to pray. Earnestly pray to the Lord that this desire be removed, that it not be fulfilled. Any desire coming up in meditation, particularly a repressed one, gradually becomes intensified. And if one or more of our

passions are involved, the results can be most disquieting.'

Girish wrote:

Sri Ramakrishna instructed everyone to abstain from telling lies. I told him, 'Sir, I tell numerous lies. How shall I be truthful?' He replied, 'Don't worry about that. You are above truth and falsehood.' When I feel tempted to tell lies, I at once visualize the Master's form, and lies will not come out. Sri Ramakrishna has full sway over my heart—he has it by the power of his love. Lust, anger, and all the terrible passions vanish if one feels this transcendental love of his—no other spiritual practice is required. This realization is the highest goal of human life.

Once Girish wanted to test Sri Ramakrishna's grace and spiritual power. With this in mind, he went to a brothel, intending to spend the night there. But at midnight he experienced an unbearable burning sensation all over his body, and he immediately left the place and returned home. The next morning he went to Dakshineswar and told the whole story to Sri Ramakrishna. The Master listened and then told him firmly: 'Rascal, do you think you have been caught by a harmless water snake and will be able to escape? You have been bitten by a real cobra. After three cries you will be silenced.' Girish's faith in Sri Ramakrishna was strengthened. He was coming to believe that the Master was a saviour of souls like Sri Chaitanya, who redeemed the two villains, Jagai and Madhai. On another occasion, again wanting to test his guru, Girish deliberately tried to think of a worldly thought in Sri Ramakrishna's presence, but he found that he could not.

On July 28, 1885, Sri Ramakrishna went to the home of Nanda Bose, a wealthy man of Calcutta, to see his collection of pictures of gods and goddesses. He was very much impressed. He said to Nanda: 'Though you are a householder, still you

have kept your mind on God. Is that a small thing? The man who has renounced the world will pray to him as a matter of course. Is there any credit in that? But blessed indeed is he who, while leading a householder's life, prays to God. He is like a man who finds an object after removing a stone weighing twenty maunds.' (A maund is approximately eighty-two pounds.)

On this same occasion, Nanda Bose served sweets to Sri Ramakrishna and then offered him betel-leaf on a tray. But the other guests had already taken some from that tray. It is the custom that something can be offered to God only if no one else has partaken of it beforehand; so the Master would not accept any. Nanda noticed this and questioned him about it. Sri Ramakrishna replied: 'Before I eat anything I offer it to God. It is a notion of mine.' Nanda was a little proud of his knowledge of Vedānta philosophy. Trying to evaluate Sri Ramakrishna's actions intellectually, he said, 'But the betel-leaf would have gone to God all the same.' He said further: 'You are a paramahansa. Why do you abide by the injunction or prohibition of the scriptures? They are meant for ignorant people.' Sri Ramakrishna smiled and again remarked, 'It is just a notion of mine.'

Nanda concluded from this that Sri Ramakrishna had not attained the highest nondualistic state of realization, beyond the pairs of opposites and the law of causation. Girish came to know of this and felt bad. He was convinced that the Master had not revealed his divine nature to Nanda because of the man's pride of learning. Wanting to test this himself, Girish invited the Master to his house. Without any comment, Girish brought in a tray of betel-leaf, took one himself, and then offered the tray to the Master. The Master immediately understood Girish's intent and, with a smile, took a betel-leaf

from the tray. Mad with joy, Girish saluted the Master again and again and then disclosed the whole story to others who were present. He who makes the rules can also change them. Girish's love had set aside all rules of religious observance. Moreover, the great teachers observe scriptural rules in order to set an example for others, and not for their own benefit.

Thus, Girish came to have firm faith in the redeeming power of Sri Ramakrishna. Years later he would say, 'Had I known that there was such a huge pit in which to throw one's sins, I would have committed many more.'

Once Sri Ramakrishna asked Girish to take a bath in the Ganga, but Girish was reluctant to do so. It is common belief that if a person takes a bath in the Ganga he becomes pure. Girish considered this mere superstition. Finally the Master persuaded him, saying, 'If you (being a great devotee) do not abide by these religious customs, who else will follow them?' Girish obeyed. Later he would bathe in the Ganga on auspicious occasions. One day the thought came to his mind that if the Master had taken on all his responsibilities, why should he have to bathe in the Ganga to be purified? And again, he wondered why the Master had asked him to do it. However, his analytical mind soon found an answer: When sinners take a bath in the Ganga, the goddess Ganga absorbs their sin and makes them pure. On the other hand, it is believed that when holy people bathe, she gains virtue by offering peace and delight to them. He concluded that through the Master's grace he had become so pure that by his bathing the redeeming power of Mother Ganga would increase a hundredfold!

Where there is love there is faith. Girish's passionate love for Sri Ramakrishna endowed him with what the Master himself described as 'one hundred twenty-

five percent faith.' He loved to talk about Sri Ramakrishna to his friends and bring them to the Master to be blessed. Knowing this the Master one day prayed aloud to the Divine Mother: 'Mother, I cannot talk so much. Give a little power to Kedar, Ram, Girish, and Vijay, so that people may go to them first, learn a little, and at last come here (to me) to have their spiritual awakening with a word or two.'

In the spring of 1885, the cancer that was to prove fatal began to develop in Sri Ramakrishna's throat. In September the devotees moved him from Dakshineswar to Calcutta. There he was closer to the doctor and could be better taken care of by the devotees, who served him, supported him, and came to see him during the last months of his life.

November 6th of that year was the day of the worship of the Divine Mother Kālī. Sri Ramakrishna said to one of his disciples: 'It is good to make some arrangements for the worship. Please speak to the devotees about it.' The devotees made arrangements accordingly. In the evening nearly thirty people assembled in the Master's room. Girish described that event:

Sri Ramakrishna sat down to perform the worship, surrounded by flowers, fruits, and all the various articles for worship. Suddenly he turned to me and said: 'It is the Divine Mother's day. One should sit and meditate like this.' I do not know what took hold of me at that point. I just rushed forward and, chanting 'Jai Sri Ramakrishna (Victory to Sri Ramakrishna),' offered flowers at his feet. The others in the room did the same. Sri Ramakrishna immediately went into samadhi, his hands assuming gestures symbolizing fearlessness and the bestowal of boons.

As Sri Ramakrishna's health was steadily deteriorating, the doctor advised him to move outside of the city, where the air would be better. Consequently, a

beautiful garden house was found in Cossipore, and the move was made on December 11, 1885. An arrangement was made whereby the householder disciples of the Master would contribute money for his treatment, his food, and for the rent. The young, unmarried disciples, the nucleus of the future monastic order, would then manage the household, including the nursing and shopping. After a while some of the householder disciples noticed that the expenditure was gradually increasing. They accused the young men of carelessness and asked that the account book be strictly maintained. The young disciples, however, were offended by this and decided not to accept any more money from those householders. When the situation became tense and critical, Girish came forward with a solution: he simply set fire to the account book in front of everyone. Then he told the householder disciples to contribute each according to his capacity, and he would make up the deficit. To the monastic disciples he said, 'Don't worry. I shall sell my house if necessary and spend every bit of money for the Master.'

On January 1, 1886, Sri Ramakrishna felt strong enough to take a walk in the garden. It was a holiday, and many devotees had come from Calcutta to visit the Master that afternoon. He began walking slowly through the garden, and the devotees followed him. Suddenly Sri Ramakrishna said to Girish, 'Well, Girish, what have you found in me that you proclaim me before all as an Incarnation?' Falling to his knees before the Master and saluting him with folded hands, Girish responded with great emotion: 'Who am I to speak of Him? Even the sages Vyasa and Valmiki could find no words to measure His glory!'

Sri Ramakrishna was deeply moved. He blessed Girish and the assembled devotees, saying: 'What more need I tell you? I bless you all. Be illumined!' Then he went into samadhi and began to bless the devotees, touching them one by one. With each touch he gave spiritual awakening.

One day, not long after this, Gopal Ghosh (who later became known as Swami Advaitananda) expressed to the Master his desire to distribute ochre cloths and *rudrākṣa* rosaries to monks. Sri Ramakrishna pointed to his young disciples and said: 'Why not give them to these boys? They are full of the spirit of renunciation. You won't find better monks any where else.' Gopal had twelve pieces of cloth and twelve rosaries which he handed over to the Master. Then Sri Ramakrishna himself distributed them among eleven of his young disciples. Thus, the foundation of the future Ramakrishna Order was laid by the Master. One cloth and one rosary were left, and the Master asked that they be kept for Girish; for, indeed, he was second to none in his spirit of renunciation.

Girish did not visit the Master very often at Cossipore because he could not bear to see the Master ill. One day Girish went there after the Master had eaten some farina pudding. The unwashed cup with the remnant of the pudding, mixed with the discharge from his throat wound, was still on the floor, and some tiny ants were eating it. Pointing to the cup, Sri Ramakrishna said to Girish, 'Look! And still people call me an avatar!' Girish immediately remarked: 'Sir, now even those ants will get liberation. For what other reason should you have this disease?'

(To be concluded)



## TEILHARD DE CHARDIN: AND THE INVINCIBLE ENERGIES OF LOVE

DR DONALD SZANTHO HARRINGTON

When people sometimes ask me, as they do, to what I credit whatever success I may have had in my Manhattan ministry,<sup>1</sup> I reply: It is because I have a faith; I am a believer. I have a faith by which to live and from which to preach and teach. Because everyone needs such a faith, they are drawn to listen to me, and can be helped by what I have to say.

I believe that this universe is an orderly universe. I know that it stems from Something greater and more wonderful than I, who am only a small part of its wholeness. But because I, who am only a part, am a person, I know that It is also at-the-least personal. That Something for me, thus, is *Someone*.

That Someone, who for me is God, I have gradually learned to describe through my researches into the nature of things. Through the whole array of the sciences from geology to sociology and psychology, and by the intuitions, myths and teachings of all the world's great religions. Paramount among my teachers were the following:

1. The author was Senior Minister at the Community Church of New York, Manhattan, for thirty-eight years until he retired in 1982.

Henry Nelson Wieman, the great process philosopher and empirical theologian under whom I studied almost fifty years ago at the University of Chicago Divinity School. Wieman, a Protestant Christian, later a Unitarian, contributed the great idea of *God in the process*—the dynamic God that is Being-Becoming, portrayed in the process of evolution as ever higher forms of creative interaction between parts of a whole, in which there is ever-increasing mutuality--mutual support, mutual enhancement, and mutual harmony with the purposive whole of which it is a systemic fragment. With Weiman, I began to see and feel God as superhuman, but not necessarily supernatural, as the source and energizing force pulling things together in a universe otherwise characterized by energy dissipation and dissolution.

Secondly, there was Martin Buber, the Jewish philosopher and sage, who helped me to understand the interplay of religious concepts and practices with righteous, human living, who brought the Biblical heritage alive for me, and let me discover the unique place of freedom of will and choice in God's plan for human growth in character and responsibility. Nothing I

have ever read has stimulated my thinking more than Buber's *Between Man and Man*.

A third great influence was Rabindranath Tagore, the Bengali poet of India, whose prayers and songs gave me as a young man a vehicle for the expression of my deepest thoughts and feelings about God. For Tagore, God was not a theological argument, but a first-hand relational experience. My Mother's gift of his little book of prayers and songs, entitled *Gitanjali*, on my fourteenth birthday opened up a new world of devotional expression which greatly heightened the meaning of my theological concepts themselves, as they emerged across the years.

Fourthly, Dr. John Haynes Holmes, my beloved Unitarian predecessor in this pulpit who gave me a stirring model of fearless religious and social prophecy, and the carrying of the message into action to change the world and make it over more in the image of the prophet's vision. His preaching was a flaming fire, and his life and work exemplified all that he sought to teach. Happy the preacher who has a good model for his ministry.

Finally, there was Pierre Teilhard de Chardin, the Roman Catholic, Jesuit priest-scientist-philosopher who was the one who for me brought it all together, tying present to all the past, and the past to all the future. All the way from the Alpha to the Omega, in the process bringing science and religion back together again as harmonious partners serving the human and divine adventure. What Teilhard de Chardin did for me, principally through his great work, *The Phenomenon of Man*, was to help me to assemble all of the parts of the immense puzzle of this universal life we all share so as to form a picture that made sense, a moving picture in which I was not only an observer, but part of the observed, a participant in the process I was looking at. He put it all together into a

single hypothesis, a unified theory, into which the scientific knowledge I had gained across the years could be made to fit. For this I shall always be profoundly grateful.

Pierre Teilhard de Chardin was born in the South of France in May 1, 1881 into a devout Catholic family. He early decided on his vocation of priest and set as his goal becoming a member of the Jesuit order. His hope was to become a servant of God and humanity through scholarship, scientific and philosophical research, and teaching. Before he was through, he had become one of the greatest and most comprehensive scholars of our time. One of his students Marcel Legaut would later write of him:

We were personally surprised to find a priest who approached religious questions with intellectual vigour, with no attempt to conceal or avoid even the most thorny problems. As young believers of goodwill, we knew of course that such spiritual and intellectual honesty was possible. But the fact was that despite our Principal's care to choose speakers from priests of such integrity, we often enough had occasion to spot the smile or joke which was really an evasion of an objection, to detect the lack of any real interest on the part of the speaker in a rigorous classification of the questions treated and to sense the desire to teach rather than to learn the truth, to solve the difficulties of others rather than one's own, and indeed to seek to forget the latter by busying one's self in the apostolate.

But with Father Teilhard the very opposite was true. When he spoke it was our turn to have the timidity of our pusillanimous faith unmasked, to recognize our own intellectual cowardice, our unconscious but unrelenting search for security and composure, in a word, the childishness of our faith, and—however disguised, the corroding dishonesty of our spiritual life.

From the beginning, Teilhard's theological orthodoxy seems to have been held in some doubt by his superiors, who were somewhat chary about his theories of man and God, and probably happy to send him off to China for researches that might keep

him away from impressionable young students.

A large part of his life was spent in China as the chief advisor to the Chinese government in the fields of geology and palaeontology, the study of the earth's crust and the clues to its past history to be found in the fossil remains therein. One of the results of this was that all of his later hypotheses concerning the future of life and the human element were well grounded in a thorough knowledge of our planetary beginnings and pre-human evolutionary development.

The altogether extraordinary thing that Teilhard does is to assemble and present the scientific data from the many different branches of science that demonstrate that the universe in its entirety must be regarded as one gigantic process, a process of becoming which had an Alpha or beginning, in the distant past, and which proceeds, following certain constant and detectable universal laws, towards a foreseeable end or Omega Point, a process which he calls a 'cosmogensis', which can be defined by the *direction* of its evolutionary development, its deducible future trends, and its own inherent possibilities. Once you have accepted the foundation principle of evolution, he points out, you can extrapolate backwards into history to find the pattern of the past, and then by taking that pattern and extrapolating forward, that is, by applying it imaginatively to the future, you are in a position to develop a plausible forecast of the future, and even to begin to make out the dim outlines of the ultimate.

For Teilhard, evolution is a process that began, not with life, but at the very beginning of the universe—with the Big Bang itself, eighteen or twenty billion years ago. Since that beginning a pattern slowly emerges, whose character is a combining of electrons to form atoms, and

molecules, and molecules first simple and then more and more complex elements, the organisms, all the way up the biological, evolutionary ladder to conscious, reflective, *future-determining* man. Throughout all of this, he declares, science discovers and describes an *irreversible coherence*.

In this age-long upbuilding process, *this cosmogenesis*, there are successive stages. The earth-process moves from geo-genesis, the story of the rocks, to geogenesis, the story of life, to psycho-genesis, the drama of emerging degrees of consciousness, to noogenesis, the coming upon the scene of man with his self-conscious, reflective mind, and his collective spirit which we call culture, which made a coherent civilization possible, and whose accumulated and transmitted knowledge have carried him out into the stars! Teilhard shows us in detail how the earth has evolved one skin after another, from a core of iron, the barysphere, to the outer rock or lithosphere, to the water skin or hydrosphere, to the atmosphere which makes life possible, to the biosphere in all its wonderful proliferations of plant and animal life, to the noosphere, reflective and collective Man. As he puts it: 'The earth, in man, gets a new skin, and finds its soul!'

In this long, natural, evolving process there have been break-through points where the process has lunged forward, so to speak, though if you look carefully you can see the preparations already there in scarcely distinguishable, rudimentary form. Such was the emergence of life from the non-living. For how long did it tremble on the edge before conditions became just right for life to emerge?

Then, those first single-celled creatures moving through the warm seas, multiplying by dividing, then seeking each other out, clinging together. (Isn't it amazing, how, from the very beginning, living things have always wanted to be together. 'Reach out



and touch someone,' is not just a slogan of A.T. & T. Corp. but the most ancient of all of the great laws of life!)

Then, there came another break-through, one that no one could have suspected, though after it happened it seemed so obvious. The growing cluster of cells clinging together became cumbersome and unwieldy; and then somehow some cells found a way to perform one function on behalf of the whole cluster, while others performed a different function. Thus, the whole cluster became more effective, but also naturally dependent, each one doing his job well and trusting others to do their different jobs equally well. So emerged more and more complex creatures enjoying the effectiveness of everincreasing differentiation of function of their separate parts. Advancing complexification became advancing integration, the more and more perfect functioning of part with part for the well-being of the whole—and simultaneously of every part. What Wieman called that mutuality of support, enhancement and meaning which is, in fact God-in-the-Evolutionary Process, and the best objective description of the relationship of Love.

The next break-through was to reflective man. Physically, anatomically, it was not a long step from the higher anthropoids to primitive man. But the consequences of the achievement of the reflective mind were incalculable. The universe became conscious of itself—evolution became not only conscious of itself but capable of an increasing degree of self-direction, a self-direction consciously aware of the requirements for future success within this planetary context. As Teilhard put it succinctly: 'In the great game that is being played, we are (increasingly) the players, as well as the cards and the stakes.'

As players we humans face certain great problems which we have to master. One of these is the trap of individual isolation,

choosing to live for ourselves at the expense of the rest of the body of humankind. (How foolishly our country is off on that kick today!) Another is the collective trap, compelling the individual to socialize whether he will or no, in which case we become like the ants or the bees who have no choice. The challenge to individual men and women is to achieve an individuality which chooses to realize itself in living for the well-being of the whole planet, and all its creatures. As Teilhard says:

'From one end of the world to the other, all the peoples, to remain human, or to become so, are inexorably led to formulate the hopes and problems of the modern earth in the very same terms. . . 'We reach the personalization of the individual by the humanization of the whole.'

Even more specifically, he says: 'the day of nations is over. What we have to do now (if we are not to perish) is to shake off old-fashioned prejudices and set about building the planet Earth.' Calling for a new 'spirit of the Earth,' or 'Earth-sense,' he wrote:

By 'earth-sense' I mean a passionate feeling for the common destiny that is continually drawing the thinking portion of life still further forward. No feeling has firmer roots in nature and none, accordingly, is stronger. But, in fact there is no feeling, either, that is so slow to make itself evident, since, if it is to become explicit, our consciousness must first rise above the widening (but still much too narrow) circle of family country and race, and realize at last that the only truly natural and real human unity is *the spirit of the earth*.

And then there is the problem of the future of the earth, and whether evolution *has* any *long* future on earth. What is its next stage? What will this human spirit do when some day, millions of years from now, the earth grows too cold to support life?

Teilhard is not afraid of such questions.

Listen to him confront them with his clear reason, and calm rationality. He writes:

Since its birth, knowledge has made its greatest advances when stimulated by some particular problem of life needing a solution, and its most sublime theories would always have drifted, rootless, on the flood of human thought if they had not been promptly incorporated into some way of mastering the world. Accordingly the march of humanity, as a prolongation of that of all other animate forms develops indubitably in the direction of a conquest of matter put to the service of mind. *Increased power for increased action.* But, finally and above all, *increased action for increased being.*

Of old, the forerunners of our chemists strove to find the philosopher's stone. Our ambition has grown since then. It is no longer to find gold but life, and in view of all that has happened in the last fifty years, who would dare to say that this is a mere mirage? With our knowledge of hormones we appear to be on the eve of having a hand in the development of our bodies and even of our brains. With the discovery of genes it appears that we shall soon be able to control the mechanism of organic heredity. And with the synthesis of albuminoids imminent, we may well one day be capable of producing what the earth left to itself, seems no longer able to produce: a new wave of organisms, an artificially provoked neo-life. Immense and prolonged as the universal groping has been since the beginning, many possible combinations have been able to slip through the fingers of chance and have had to await man's calculated measures in order to appear. Thought artificially perfects the thinking instrument itself; life rebounds forward under the collective effect of its reflection. The dream which human research obscurely fosters is fundamentally that of mastering, beyond all atomic or molecular affinities, the ultimate energy of which all other energies are merely servants; and thus, by grasping the main spring of evolution, seizing the tiller of the world.

I salute those who have the courage to admit that their hopes extend that far, they are at the pinnacle of mankind; and I would say to them that there is less difference than people think between research and adoration. But there is a point that I would like them to note, one that will lead us gradually to a more complete form of conquest and adoration. However far

knowledge pushes its discovery of the 'essential fire' and however capable it becomes some day of remodeling and perfecting the human element, it will always find itself in the end facing the same problem—how to give to each and every element its final value by grouping them in the unity of an organized whole.

Now, there is the ancient problem and demand, and the responding pattern—the seeking out of that ever increasingly effective, --by free choice and friendly persuasion, --mutual support, enhancement and meaning--of all for one and one for all, on a planetary scale.

Teilhard spells it out:

Mankind must realize that its first function is to penetrate, intellectually unify, and harness the energies which surround it, in order to still further understand and master them. If we are going toward a human era of science, it will be eminently an era of human science. Man, the knowing subject will perceive at last that man 'the object of knowledge' is the key to the whole science of nature.

Up to the present, whether from prejudice or fear, science has been reluctant to look man in the face but has constantly circled round the human object without daring to tackle it. Yet the more persistently we try to avoid man in our theories, the more tightly drawn become the circles we describe around him, as though we were caught up in his vortex. Physics is no longer sure whether what is left in its hands is pure energy, or on the contrary, thought. At the end of its constructions, biology, if it takes its discoveries to their logical conclusion, finds itself forced to acknowledge the assemblage of thinking beings as the present terminal form of evolution. Man represents, individually and socially, the most synthesized state under which the stuff of the universe is available to us. To decipher man is essentially to try to find out how the world was made and how it ought to go on making itself. So far we have certainly allowed our race to develop at random and we have given too little thought to the question of what medical and moral factors *must replace the crude forces of natural selection* should we repress them. In the course of the coming centuries it is indispensable that a nobly human form of eugenics, on a standard worthy of our personalities, should be discovered and developed.

Is it not precisely the world itself which, culminating in thought, expects us to think out again the instinctive impulses of nature so as to perfect them? Reflective substance requires reflective treatment. If there is a future for mankind, it can only be imagined in terms of a harmonious conciliation of what is free with what is levelled up and totalized. Points involved are the distribution of the resources of the globe, the control of the trek toward unpopulated areas, the optimum use of the powers set free by mechanization, the physiology of nations and races, geo-economy, geo-politics, geo-demography, the organization of research developing into a reasoned organization of the earth. Whether we like it or not, all the science and all our needs converge in the same direction. We need and are irresistibly being led to create, by means of and beyond all physics, all biology and all psychology *a science of human energetics*.

It is in the course of that creation, already obscurely begun, that science by being led to concentrate on man, will find itself increasingly face to face with religion.

And what of the long future? Teilhard is not afraid to think of this. 'The stuff of the universe,' he writes, 'by becoming thinking, has not yet completed its evolutionary cycle. We are moving towards some, new critical point that lies ahead. We are faced with a harmonized *collectivity of consciousness* equivalent to a sort of super-consciousness'. 'In every organized whole, the parts perfect themselves to fulfil themselves.' 'The more other they become in conjunction, the more they find themselves as "self".'

Looking far into the future, he sees 'the birth of some single centre from the convergent beams of millions of elementary centres dispersed over the whole surface of the thinking earth.'

This single centre being supremely spiritualized will be supremely personal, will itself be Personal. Whatever it is that has been moving within the universal life, has been not only internally driven in its 'irreversible coherence,' but externally, *lovingly*, drawn towards a supreme culmina-

tion, and because Love is always personal, the Something is, in fact, Some One!

Here is how Teilhard de Chardon says it:

I adopt the supposition that our noosphere is destined to close in upon itself and that it is in a psychical rather than a spatial direction that it will find an outlet. Hence quite naturally, the notion of change of state recurs.

Noogenesis rises upwards in us and through us unceasingly. We have pointed to the principal characteristics of that movement: the closer association of the greatness of thought, the synthesis of individuals and of nations or races, the need of an autonomous and supreme personal focus to bind elementary personalities (voluntarily) together without delforming them, in an atmosphere of active sympathy. And once again all this results from the combined action of two curvatures—the roundness of the earth and the cosmic convergence of mind—in conformity with the laws of complexity and (ever-heightening) consciousness.

Now when sufficient elements have sufficiently agglomerated, this essentially convergent movement will attain such intensity and such quality that mankind, *taken as a whole*, will be obliged as happened to the individual forces of instinct—to reflect upon itself at a single point, that is to say, in this case, to abandon its organo-planetary foothold so as to pivot itself on the transcendent centre of its increasing concentration. This will be the end and the fulfilment of the spirit of the earth.

The end of the world—the wholesale internal introversion upon itself of the noosphere, which has simultaneously reached the outermost limit of its complexity and its centrality.

The end of the world, the overthrow of equilibrium, detaching the mind, fulfilled at last, from its material matrix, so that it will henceforth rest with all its weight on God-Omega.

The end of the world—critical point simultaneously of emergence and immersion, of maturation and elevation.

One of the by-products of all of this, he points out, has been the reuniting of science and religion, the rediscovery by science, of what he calls 'the invincible energies of Love.'

After close on to two centuries of passionate struggles, neither science nor faith has succeeded

in discrediting its adversary. On the contrary, it becomes obvious that neither can develop normally without the other, and the reason is simple: the same life animates both. Neither in its impetus nor its achievements can science go to its limits without becoming tinged with mysticism and charged with faith.

Man will only continue to work and to research so long as he is prompted by a passionate interest. Now this interest is entirely dependent on the conviction, that the universe has a direction and that it could - indeed, if we are faithful, it *should* - result in some sort of irreversible perfection. Hence comes belief in progress.

Scientifically we can envisage an almost indefinite improvement in the human organism and human society. But as soon as we try to put our dreams into practice, we realize that the problem remains indeterminate or even insoluble unless, with some partially super-rational intuition, we admit the convergent properties of the world we belong to. Hence belief in unity.

Furthermore, if we decide, under the pressure of facts, in favour of an optimism of unification, we run into the technical necessity of discovering in addition to the impetus required to push us forward, an addition to the particular objective which should determine our route - - the special binder or cement which will associate our lives together, vitally, without diminishing or distorting them. Hence, (religious) belief in a supremely attractive centre which has personality.

Teilhard presents to us in this great work a convincing interpretation of the phenomena of life culminating in the reflecting mind and loving heart of Man.

Love is the most universal, the most formidable, and the most mysterious of cosmic energies. The most expressive and at the same time the most profoundly true account of universal evolution would doubtless consist in telling the story of the evolution of love. The progress toward Man, through Woman, is in fact the progress of the whole universe. The vital concern for Earth is that these bearings be established.

Let man discern the wholeness of reality shining spiritually through the flesh. Then his understanding will master what previously served only to frustrate and disappoint his power to love. Some day, after we have mastered the winds, the waves, the tides and gravity, we shall harness for God the energies of love. Then

for the second time in the history of the world, man will have discovered fire.

In other words, there is purpose, point and power discernible throughout this universe of cosmogenesis. There is Something within driving us towards the ever-more-loving relationship. And there is Someone beyond our immediate ken loving us into lovingness, reaching out to us, as we reach out to one another to warm us out of our selfishness and greed, and to draw us out of our personal prejudices and private preoccupations. And in its warmth and light we will learn to give up the cynical exploitation of our fellow humans for *our own* individual benefit *because we want to*, because we know better, because we know we are loved, and that all our destiny and all our hope is to live in love for one another. The single cell which goes its own way, heedless of the whole or of its companion cells is an outlaw, a cancer, and that we need not be. For our very nature calls us to the Love that is of God, the God that shall one day be, as St Paul put it, 'All in all,' a Love which, no matter what befall, will never let us go. And as Paul said in his Letter to the Romans: 'In all these things we are more than conquerors through him who loved us. For I am sure that neither death, nor life, nor angels, nor principalities, nor powers, nor things present, nor things to come, nor height, nor depth, nor any other creature or circumstance, will be able to separate us from the love of God.'

This is the great Teilhardian hypothesis. On his one hundred and first birthday I commend it to you as the most satisfying, scientifically and religiously, of all the theories, of all the universal life theories I have yet encountered.

Father Teilhard finished his monumental work, *The Phenomenon of Man* in the year 1940, but, as with so many other of his theological and scientific speculations, the

church refused to let him publish it. But he was permitted to circulate it to his friends for criticism, among them some non-Catholics. Otherwise, it might never have seen the light of day. It was published only after his death in 1955, here in America, which was his home during the last years following World War II. Since then, however, it has won acclaim, not only outside, but within the Church he loved to his dying breath. Today, great Catholic universities have whole departments focussed on his studies and ideas. And it is a new and better church thereby.

A little before 10 April, 1955, Easter Sunday, the day on which Teilhard was given the grace to die suddenly, he had said to a close and dear friend, 'I go to

meet him who comes.' And then he prayed a prayer which fully exemplifies his faith:

'Lord, since with every instinct of my being and through all the changing fortunes of my life, it is You whom I have ever sought, You whom I have set at the heart of universal matter, it will be in a resplendence which shines through all things and in which all things are ablaze, that I shall have the felicity of closing my eyes.'

That felicity today surrounds his memory, and will lighten the path of humankind with hope into the far distant future, and who knows, but into that blazing Omega of Perfect Love in which he so devoutly believed, and which every single one of us has the responsibility to help create. So may it be.

## REVIEWS AND NOTICES

**SPIRITUAL IDEALS FOR MODERN MAN:** BY SWAMI VIDISHANANDA. Published by Ramakrishna Mission Saradapitha, Belur Math. Howrah 711 202 1980 Pp. 200. Rs. 20

The old resurgent spirit and the integrated world outlook of India were rejuvenated in modern times by the contact of the Indian mind with the West and assimilation of its scientific spirit, and a great neo-Vedantic movement was initiated by Sri Ramakrishna and Vivekananda in the last century. Swami Vivekananda carried the synthetic vision of India to the West in 1893 and spread its universal message of Vedanta and Yoga in America and Europe. He started Centres to continue his work and to preach and teach Spiritual Ideals to meet the needs of humanity in harmony with man's scientific achievements. In due course, these Centres multiplied in USA and other places headed by competent Indian Swamis.

'In this book', as the blurb says, 'Swami Vividishananda Founder-Leader of the Vedantic Society of Western Washington, Seattle, presents through his recorded lectures (in USA) the ideas and ideals of the Neo-Vedantic traditions initiated by Sri Ramakrishna and Swami Vivekananda.' The Swami deals with some of the important topics of spiritual life and its background lucidly, in simple language from the Vedantic point of view in the context of, and

illustrated by, the teachings of Sri Ramakrishna-Vivekananda and provides answers to the several theoretical and practical problems that face the modern man.

The first lecture 'Are You the Master of Your Destiny' removes the misunderstanding about the profound and universal Law of Karma (Law of Cause and Effect) and shows that along with its corollary of Rebirth, it makes man the Master of his own destiny and he can perfect himself progressively through many lives by his own efforts. He does not have to entrust his destiny to any priest or prophet, for he in his true nature is the divine soul. Divine Perfection is innate in every being, including insects and animals. Only it has to be progressively manifested, and a human being has the greatest opportunity to strive for it.

The second deals with 'Materialism', the contrary view, and shows its limitations and how it cannot answer the vital questions of man and solve his problems. The views of scientists, utilitarians, and other types of materialists are discussed and it is pointed out how 'Advaita Vedanta is the only religious philosophy that can satisfy science, that can be acceptable to modern scientists' (P. 32).

Next the 'problem of Evil' is discussed as it obstructs the manifestation of the innate divinity, and its Vedantic solution is presented. 'What

Happens after Death?' is then rationally analysed on the basis of the constituents of many-layered human personality and the law of conservation of the psychic and moral effects of our actions, which opens up innumerable opportunities to everyone to perfect oneself in due course through the law of Rebirth.

In 'Kundalini or Spiritual Power', it is shown how the cosmic divine energy lies potent in every being, like the potency of a tree in a seed, and the means and methods of awakening it.

All these ideas in the foregoing chapters hinge on the central fact that man is not a physical being, but a divine soul inhabiting a body. It uses the mechanism of the bodies—psychophysical organisms—for the progressive manifestation of its divinity and perfection through the process of evolution.

We next come to the practical aspects of inculcating these spiritual ideals. 'Symbols of Religion' discusses the oneness of religion, though different symbols are used in different faiths. All the symbols gross and fine—from images and rituals to various word and form symbols, and different conceptions of incarnations, deities, and God—help man to rise to the highest realization. The Tantras have made a science of these symbols and lay down elaborately many techniques of integrating the individual to the universal at all levels of human personality. In 'What are the Tantras', the author shows how the Tantras have developed out of the rudiments in the Vedas and that the later undesirable accretions in it are not really a part of them. However since it was not relevant here, the author could have desisted from comparing the practical outlook of the Tantras with the profound, complex, and comprehensive philosophical Advaita of Shankara in a few lines to establish the superiority of the Tantras, over it without understanding Shankara properly (P. 105-6). Philosophy must be met with philosophy and practical aspects with practical view points. And, as to the latter, Shankara's practical philosophy will accept the genuine Tantras and much more besides. Shankara too propounds the oneness of *Shakti* and *Shaktimān* (*Brahma-Sūtra Bhāṣya*, II 16,18). Some of the views expressed by the author here, though practically useful, are philosophically untenable. The spirit of the highest teachings of Ramakrishna-Vivekananda is in accord with the Advaitic view of Shankara.

Among the rest of the articles, 'Practical Aids to Meditation', 'Bhakti Yoga and the Sublimation of Emotions', 'The Law of Forgiveness', 'The

Teacher and the Disciple', give practical hints to the aspirants for spiritual life.

'Swami Vivekananda, the Spiritual Dynamo' delineates the Swami's contribution to the spiritual awakening of Man, especially in the West. And the last one, 'Christianity and Hindus', shows that the Hindus accept the 'Christ' symbol and the spiritual teachings of Jesus Christ. But, he points out, the Christians have mostly 'discarded them and politicalized Christianity and use anti-Christ methods to increase their numbers in India and elsewhere. He adds, 'There is the testimony of many Christians that Christ, the crucified saviour, is at times not to be found in the church. Fraud, political wire-pulling, theological jugglery, bigotry, as superstition, they say, are some of the undesirables that all too often characterize the church' (P. 193).

This is a timely book for the modern man who is seeking non-dogmatic, truth-oriented, universal spiritual values and ideals. The printing and get-up are nice and the price moderate for this big-size cloth-bound book of 200 pages.

SWAMI MUKHYANANDA

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**RAMAKRISHNA SADHAN PARIKRAMA**  
(*Ramakrishna's Spiritual Practices A Study*).  
BY MANORANJAN BASU. Published by Smt. Mira Basu, 50B Halderpara Road, Calcutta 700 026  
1981 Pp xxxi+146 Rs. 22

Sri Ramakrishna passed away in 1886. The next decade witnessed at least four of his biographies in print, three in Bengali and one in English. The Bengali *Lives* were written by Suresh Chandra Datta a Brahmo devotee, Ramchandra Datta and Akshay Kumar Sen, both lay disciples of Sri Ramakrishna. The English *Life*, published from London, was written by none other than the great Western savant F. Max Mueller. As years rolled on, Sri Ramakrishna began to attract the imagination of larger and larger numbers of admirers both in India and abroad. As a result, a galaxy of talented persons including several distinguished Western men of letters like Romain Rolland and Christopher Isherwood came forward to write on Sri Ramakrishna. The tradition has not ceased even today; rather it is becoming more prolific. Claude Alan Stark and Harold W. French's books published during the seventies and the book under review are notable examples of this trend.

The present book which is a translation of its original in Bengali, attempts as it is indicated in

its sub-title, to make an in-depth study of Sri Ramakrishna and the uniqueness of his *sādhana* or spiritual practices.

The author has tried to impress upon his readers how Gadadhar Chattopadhyay of Kamarpukur village rose to the exalted state of a *lokaguru*, preceptor of humanity. The evolution and transcendence of Gadadhar, the vicissitudes and adventures of his spiritual practices and the inner dialectics of their various phases have been drawn in vivid colours which place this book in a class by itself.

The printing, paper and over-all presentation of the book are of a high quality. The outline of Sri Ramakrishna's figure on the cover is at once artistic and evocative. Swami Lokeswarananda's Foreword and Kalidas Bhattacharya's Preface have certainly enriched the book.

There are, however, a few things in the book which demand a little more scrutiny on the part of the author. The author has added at the end of the book 'Explanatory Notes', a genealogical table of Sri Ramakrishna and a bibliography. Nos 5, 6, 29, 30, 31 of the 'Explanatory Notes' include names of some books only. It is not clear what relation they have got with the 'Explanatory Notes'. No. 14 reads 'The *Talala Tantra* mentions as many as sixty-four Tantras, the names of which have almost a tinge of modernity about them. These Tantras are as follows.' But the list furnished thereafter enumerates names of only 63 Tantras, instead of 64. The readers unfamiliar with Sanskrit words, particularly foreigners, would find it difficult to get the correct pronunciation of Sanskrit words. Diacritical marks on such words, therefore, would facilitate the study of the book so far as such readers are concerned. We wonder why the author has not given the sub-title of the book, 'Ramakrishna's Spiritual Practices : A Study' on the cover also. The book is in English, but the title on the cover remains the same as it is in its Bengali original.

But in comparison with the quality of the book these minor criticisms may be overlooked. The author has indeed laid the students of Ramakrishna under a debt of gratitude to him.

BR. APURVACHAITANYA

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**VEDIC SOCIALISM: BY NITYA NARAYAN BANERJEE.** Published by Hindutva Publications, U-36, Green Park, New Delhi-16. 1980. Pp. 274. Rs. 50.

It is now widely acknowledged that neither Capitalism nor Socialism can provide a lasting

foundation to human society. Both of these Schools, however, have faith in capital as the primary means to an end they know not what. But the immediate result of both the ideologies is human deprivation. Exploitation, war, pollution and starvation are the natural consequences of industrialization which is the backbone of both the societies and governs the fate of the entire globe at present. Scientists and politicians take pride in developing nuclear energy which is mainly accumulated for destructive purposes under the pretext of self-defence. Deadly nuclear weapons could destroy mankind if the slightest emotional imbalance should occur in the minds of those who control them. Alienation and dehumanization are patent everywhere in the society which is heading fast towards self-destruction. Parental love, conjugal fidelity, filial duties and social obligations are diminishing equally fast in the present-day society.

The Hindu society rooted in Vedic spiritualism, has preserved human values to a large extent in spite of various onslaughts on it and the lapse of many centuries. The author of the book under review holds that the modern society could be restructured in the light of the Vedic social structure. For him Vedic socialism is the only remedy for the ailing human society of the day. He presents a blueprint for the future society of mankind based mainly on the *varṇāśrama-dharmas* (duties pertaining to class and stages envisaged by Manu and others). Such a society is not an utopia. It was actualized in the Vedic times, as is clear from the statement of King Asvapati in whose kingdom 'there is no thief, no miser, no drunkard, no man who has not installed the sacrificial fire, no ignorant person, no adulterer, so how can there be any adulteress' (*na me steno janapade na kadāryo na madvapo, nūnāhutaḥ sūnūdvānna svairī svairinī kutah*, *Chhândogya Up.*, VII 5). Swami Vivekananda and Sri Aurobindo tried to materialize the same Vedic ideal in the present-day society where every individual could have full freedom to realize his true nature and become aware of the oneness of all living beings.

One might ask whether Vedic socialism will not put the clock back and bring us back to the primitive stage or whether it will be able to adjust with the scientific discoveries of the modern age. The author, on his part, does not see any conflict between Vedic socialism and science. He simply warns us of science becoming the master instead of the servant. If material lust is tempered with principles of spirituality no major problem can arise.

Although the author would like all the nations of the modern world to adopt the principles of Vedic Socialism, he does not advise us to wait till an ideal state is created for its implementation. According to him one can begin practising Vedic socialism at individual and family levels. This will gradually lead us to the transformation of the whole world.

The book has succeeded in presenting an out-

line of Vedic socialism for the entire humanity. The language of the book is lucid and thoughts are derived from primary sources. At places some discussions seem misplaced but the overall synthesis is commendable.

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## NEWS AND REPORTS

### VIVEKANANDA ASHRAMA, SHYAMALA TAL

*Report for April 1981 to March 1982*

Started as a centre for meditation and spiritual practices in the secluded and serene surroundings of the Kumaon range of the Himalayas at an altitude of 5,000 feet, the Vivekananda Ashrama, Shyamala Tal is now a well-developed institution with retreat facilities for monks and lay-devotees, a 15-bed indoor/outdoor hospital, a veterinary clinic, an apiary, a huge water reservoir with a capacity of 6 lakh litres of water, and a large orchard and flower garden of wide repute.

The Ashrama retreat provides accommodation for some 35 persons at a time. Besides regular evening *arati* and *Rainnam Sankirtan* on every Ekadashi day, annual festivals like the birthdays of Sri Ramakrishna, Swami Vivekananda and Holy Mother are celebrated, in which the local people and villagers join and partake of *prasad*.

The hospital and the veterinary departments are the only source of medical help to the people within a range of 54 miles between Tanakpur and Champawat. Besides free treatment, patients are given free medicines and injections. Indoor patients are also supplied diet, tea, milk and kerosene oil free of charge. During the year the hospital treated 26 indoor patients and 9,205 outdoor patients (new, 2,706; repeated cases, 6,526). The veterinary department treated 67 animals, including cows, buffalos, bulls, calves and goats.

The Ashrama water reservoir supplies drinking water to the local villagers during summer and drought periods as well as to the hospital. *Our requirements* 1. For the upkeep and improvement of the hospital including the Veterinary Unit a permanent fund of at least Rs 50,000 is to be created. Any one intending to perpetuate the memory of his/her near and dear relatives may

do so by: i. donating an Endowment Fund of Rs 5,000 for the maintenance of one bed in the hospital, ii. donating any smaller amount to the Permanent Fund.

### RAMAKRISHNA MISSION, SINGAPORE

*Report for 1981*

This centre was started in 1928 with a view to rendering service to the people of the region. The main establishment consisting of the Mission office, the Ramakrishna temple and the Boys' Home is situated at 179 Bartley Road, Singapore. *Spiritual and cultural activities.* Besides carrying on daily worship in the temple, Ramanama kirtan was held on every Ekadashi day. Birthdays of Sri Ramakrishna, Sri Sarada Devi, Swami Vivekananda, Rama, Krishna, Shankara, Guru Nanak, Jesus, Mohamed and other prophets were celebrated with special puja, discourses, devotional songs, etc. Weekly spiritual classes were conducted and a few lectures were delivered in the Singapore city. Interviews were given to earnest spiritual seekers.

*Educational activities.* The Ashrama library made available to the readers books on religion, philosophy, literature, etc. and the reading-room received a number of periodicals, journals and newspapers. Total number of books was 5,416. The book sales department of the centre made available Ramakrishna-Vivekananda-Vedanta literature to a large number of people.

*Boys' Home:* The boys' home shelters boys from poor families unable to support the children or provide suitable environment for their education. The boys are provided wholesome food and facilities for study, games, singing and participation in prayer and worship, etc. There were 45 boys during the year. The home has a children's library for the use of the boys.



## NOTES AND COMMENTS

### *A Code of Conduct for Indian Scientists*

Speaking at a meeting of young scientists organized by the Planning Commission in New Delhi on 6 November 1982, Prof. M. G. K. Menon pointed out the need for changing the existing rules for Indian scientists. He was of course referring to the administrative procedures adopted by scientists for the speedy processing and circulation of scientific information. What he did not stress, and what is perhaps most vital for the advancement of science in India, is the need for a change in the basic attitude of Indian scientists towards science itself—a change from what Pandit Nehru described as the ‘bullock-cart mentality’ of dogmatism and traditionalism to the true scientific temper.

The cause for the slow progress of science and the poor results of research in India is usually attributed to inadequate facilities and ‘politics’. This is only another instance of the bad workman’s quarrelling with his tools. Almost all the great discoveries of fundamental importance have been made by great men under simple ordinary conditions. Michael Faraday had to make insulated wire by winding sewing thread with his own hands on miles of copper wire. Marie Curie used an ordinary kitchen oven to boil tons of pitchblende. Alexander Fleming used bedpans and other hospital enamelware to culture penicillin-producing mould. Einstein’s ‘laboratory’ had nothing more than a table, a few books, a sheaf of paper and a pencil. J. B. S. Haldane, who had made India his home, pointed out thirty years ago that a great deal of research in this country, especially in the field of agriculture, needed very little equipment and investment.

As a matter of fact, most Indian research and academic institutions in India are well furnished with costly equipment. As for corruption and bureaucratic tyranny, it is good to remember that no power can prevent a truly great man from going up. The truth is, the majority of Indian scientists are not inspired by pure love of knowledge and the spirit of research. What they need is a change of basic attitude, and this calls for a code of conduct. A religious man, especially a monk, is guided in his search for Truth by certain spiritual and moral rules and, should he fail to follow these principles, he would not attain his goal. But scientists, who too are supposed to be seekers of Truth, are not saddled with such inconvenient ethical restraints. When a religious man swerves from his ideal, he is branded a whited sepulchre or a Rasputin. But a scientist who is dishonest or immoral is still recognized as a scientist owing to the mistaken notion that science is beyond ethics.

Like spiritual men scientists too have a higher moral obligation over and above the mere mechanical conformity to social conventions and statutory rules. Every Indian scientist must impose upon himself the following three imperatives as a minimum code of conduct. 1. Intense longing for truth and readiness to undergo any sacrifice for its realization. 2. Cultivation of the scientific temper consisting of objectivity, accuracy and a sense of the inter-relatedness of things. 3. Impersonality which means absence of egoism and jealousy, and readiness to share knowledge with others.

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## AN APPEAL

Ramakrishna Mission Students' Home which is an ORPHANAGE is a Unit of the Ramakrishna Mission, Belur Math, Howrah (W.B). The Home was inaugurated in 1905 by Srimat Swami Ramakrishnananda, a direct disciple of Bhagavan Sri Ramakrishna. The Home provides free boarding and lodging facilities for 191 High School boys and 119 Technical Institute students. Besides six college students are provided with free accommodation in the Home. In addition there is a Primary School where 222 boys and 168 girls are studying as day scholars.

During the year 1942-46 when the Residential High School was located temporarily in Uttiramerur, the staff and pupils engaged themselves in rural services. As a result of these, an elementary school was started in 1945 in the village of Malliankarnai 82 K. M. from Madras in Uttiramerur Taluk of Chingleput District. There are 242 students in the school in standards I to VIII. A Hostel for 'Backward Classes and Harijan Students was started in 1947. Now there are 32 students in the Hostel.

One temporary shed measuring 40'  $\times$  16' was constructed in 1947 to house the standards VII and VIII. The other classes are conducted in the additional sheds with mud walls and palmairah leaves roofing. As the buildings are old and are in a dilapidated condition it has been decided to construct a pucca building at a cost of about Rs. 12/- lakhs. The philanthropic public are requested to donate liberally for this programme to serve the backward classes in a remote rural area. Donations to the Ramakrishna Mission are exempted from Income-Tax under section 80-G.

Cheques and Drafts may please be crossed and drawn in favour of "Ramakrishna Mission Students' Home, Madras-4" and sent by Registered Post.

Thanking you,

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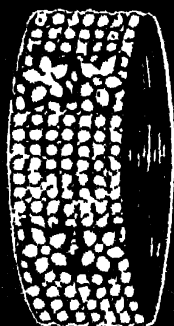
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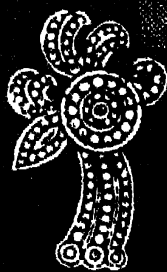
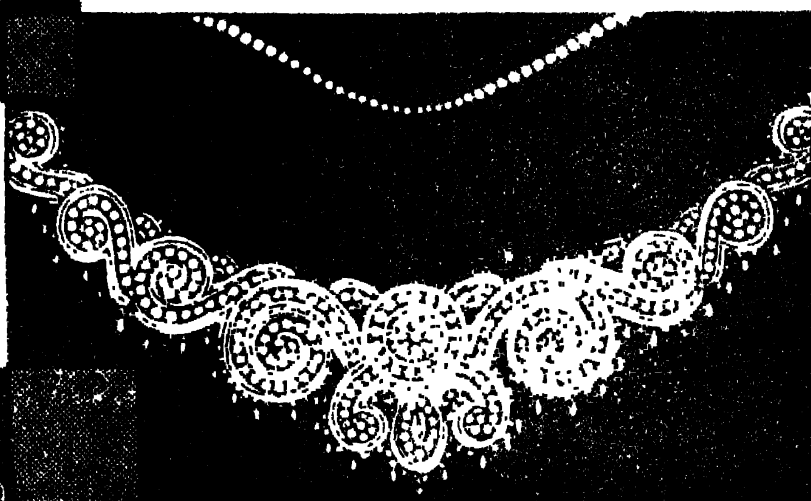
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